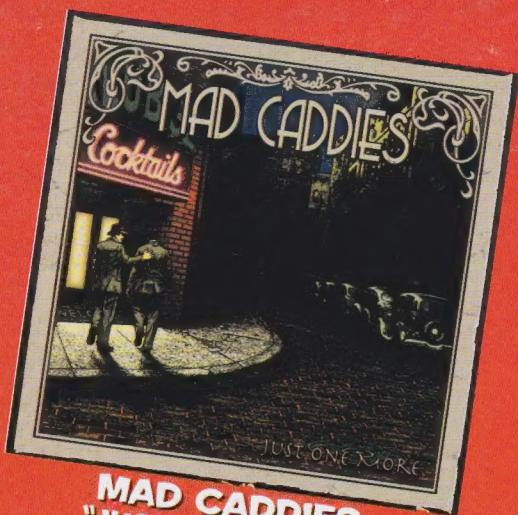


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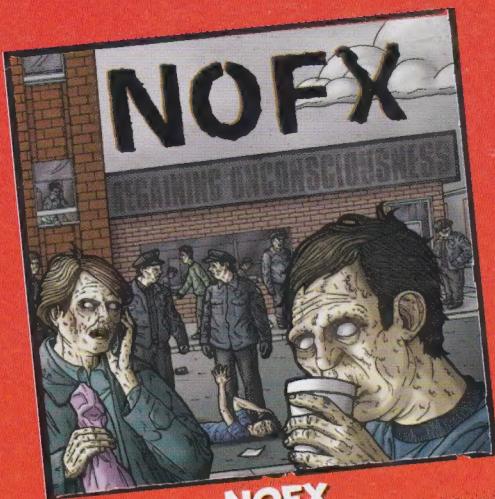
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issue #84

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channel 3  
dark day dawning  
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jason loewenstein  
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safety in numbers  
slowjets  
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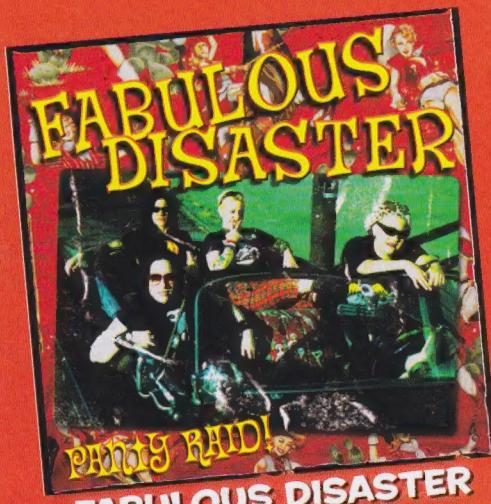
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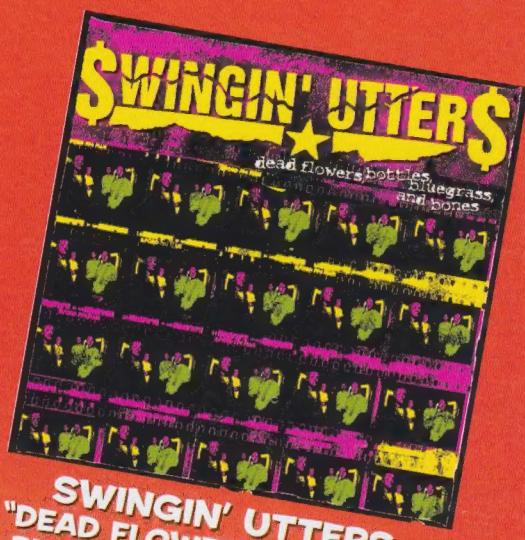
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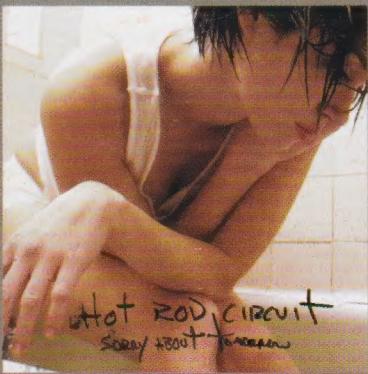
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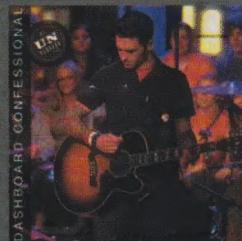
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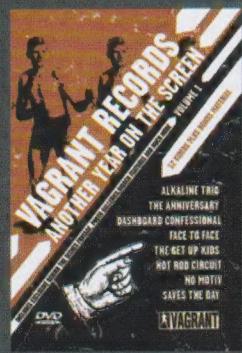
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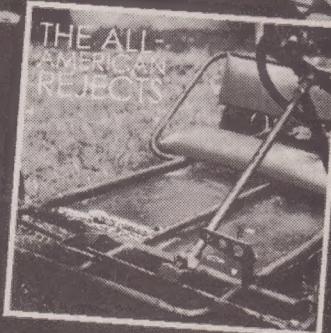
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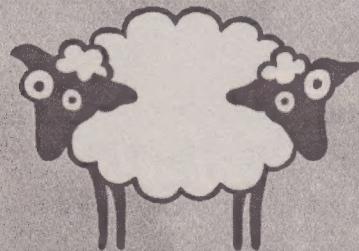
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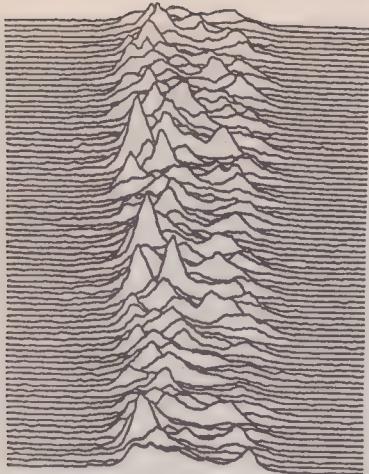
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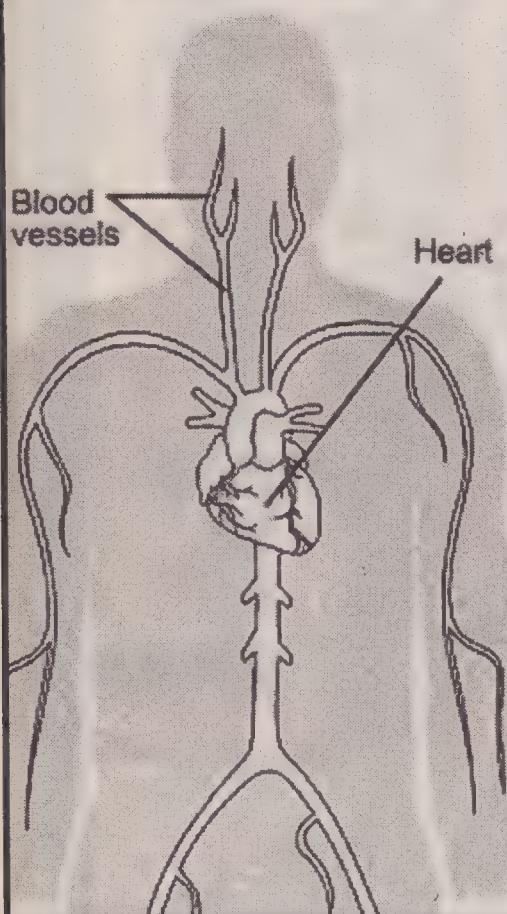
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# WHO THE FUCK IS GREGGORY?

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football team, so.

There's something I really love: football. Now, I'm not exactly your macho type. You remember those commercials about what real men are, with the trucks and working on engines, how they don't write poetry and shit like that? I flunk those tests of manhood. I'm not even a generic sports fan. But football, man, I love that shit. I don't care about college football, but I follow the NFL big time. I'm not exactly getting off on the hard hits, I'm not looking for fights and injuries, but I just love the game, love it, fucking LOVE it! I particularly love Jerry Rice; I love that he's an example of the guy that works the hardest being the best—and STILL continuing to work the hardest instead of getting all full of himself. I love how he has demonstrated that the 49ers were wrong in the way they treated him his last two seasons there, how he's 40 and started in the Pro Bowl, love that he caught a TD in the Super Bowl even though the Raiders got trounced. I love that he's not a trash talker or a prima donna. On the other hand, I love to hate bitches like Terrell Owens and Randy Moss and Warren Sapp, love to root against them, love to suffer when they do well. I loved watching Owens throw a fit during the 49ers' playoff loss, loved watching one of his dropped passes bounce into the hands of a defender, love that he looks like such a retard when this happens, love that if hap-

My boss here in SKRATCH didn't bother to tell me in advance that he wanted a love-themed column this month, until AFTER I'd finished yet another masterwork (of course) for this space. THEN he tells me what he wants: a column on what I love and love to hate. Well, I love to hate that frigging prick for not telling me in advance. You hear me, boss?! Ah, who am I kidding? He's paying me, after all, and he's even on my

pens way too frequently for someone of his athletic ability. But more than watching, I love playing football. I love strategizing and the fact that it's a great workout without seeming like a workout. I love that knowing there's a game on Sunday makes the working out I do during the week seem to have more of a focus than just staying in shape. I love trying to do everything just like Rice does and love that it seems to work pretty damn well. I love that there's less macho bullshit out there than I initially expected, but I love to hate what there is of it, love (even though I'm not particularly competitive) to catch a TD on somebody with that attitude. I love to hate the way some guys whoop it up when they haven't done shit.

I love the medium of TV, that it's such a great technology and I love to hate the majority of its content. I love to hate the news, not the content (which I simply hate, so awful is this world), but the newscasts themselves: the mistakes they make, the fatuity, the encapsulated delivery of the tragic events of the day, the fluff pieces, the so-called investigative reports, the utter nonsense. I love to hate fuckers winding through SoCal on a high-speed chase (even though I kinda love to watch). I love BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER and SOUTH PARK and anything I can find on the great apes and dolphins and orca, on astronomy and physics, and I love to hate the characters on THE PRACTICE, love to root for those scumbag lawyers to fucking die (even though I know they won't), love to watch them suffer. I love I'd hate baseball, love to dismiss Barry Bonds and all that shit because a lovely sport has been so fucked up by rule and equipment changes, etc. I love to talk back to the TV when I see something. I love to hate, I love to love to hate, to get worked up about things I'm really not all that worked up about.

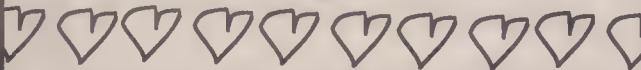
I love Howard Stern, I love marijuana, and I love to hate fuckers who hate one and/or the other not out of a difference of taste (which I have no problem with) but out of ignorance, out of thinking that these things are somehow hurting society. I love to hate the president and both major political parties. I'm talking about something different than simply hating them (like I hate suffering and bigotry and the fascism in religion and our judicial system): it's love to hate because of the freedom that I have to spew my venom at them, to say that Bush is harmful to this country and that the Republican Party shares some things in common with the Nazis, and that the Democrats aren't all that different anymore.

I love some music, a relatively small percentage of it, but what I love, I REALLY love. I love The Cure and Modest Mouse, I love John Coltrane and The Sex Pistols, I love Pavement and the TRAINSPOTTING soundtrack, I love the 70s albums by Pink Floyd, I love The Pixies and the first album by This Mortal Coil. I love certain Beatles songs but the Stones more overall. I love to hate all the genre words for music, love to hate how monotonous most lyrics are, love to hate the complete lack of thought and originality that characterizes most of the music industry. But I love that there are some trends in music right now that I like, love that I'm finding more stuff that I can stand, more stuff that I might not want to own but that doesn't compel me to spin the dial (not that most of it makes it to the radio around here outside of KCRW or KPFK).

And since the theme of this issue of SKRATCH is motivated by Valentine's Day, I'll close by saying that I love girls (particularly fit ones), can't help it, love that it's not all that difficult to come across females I find attractive, love the feeling of being attracted to someone. But I love to hate those TV dating shows that display something true about romance, love to hate the way the people on them pursue one another in such a superficial way, wanting each other based on nothing of substance, want the act and not the person, the sex and not the partner, the what regardless of the who. I imagine life must be much simpler if that's what you're after, if that satisfies you. I wouldn't know. That fact, neither love nor love to hate, I just hope that, whatever you're after, your Valentine's Day is better than mine. Tell me about it so I can get a vicarious thrill: whogreggory@yahoo.com.

# SHOWS YOU KNOW YOU'LL LOVE

February 16 - Coheed & Cambria - Mason Jar - Arizona  
 February 16 - Nekromantix - Chain Reaction - Anaheim, Ca  
 February 16 - Rilo Kiley - Troubadour - Los Angeles, Ca  
 February 17 - Sparta - Nitas Hideaway - Arizona  
 February 18 - Hey Mercedes - Knitting Factory - New York, Ny  
 February 18 - Rainer Maria - Graceland - Seattle, Wa  
 February 19 - Sparta - The Huntridge - Las Vegas, Nv  
 February 19 - Smile- Showcase Theater - Corona, Ca  
 February 19 - Further Seems Forever - Troubadour - Los Angeles, Ca  
 February 20 - Trans Am- Troubadour - Los Angeles, Ca  
 February 20 - Further Seems Forever - Chain Reaction - Anaheim, Ca  
 February 21 - Unwritten Law - Soma - San Diego, Ca  
 February 21 - Sno-Core With Sparta - House Of Blues - Anaheim, Ca  
 February 21 - Bane - Showcase Theater - Corona, Ca  
 February 21 - Reverend Horton Heat - Graceland - Seattle, Wa  
 February 21 - The Stereo - Chain Reaction - Anaheim, Ca  
 February 22 - Further Seems Forever - The Huntridge - Las Vegas, Nv  
 February 22 - Rainer Maria- Troubadour - Los Angeles, Ca  
 February 22 - Angry Samoans - Showcase Theater, Corona, Ca  
 February 23 - The Donnas - Showbox - Seattle, Wa  
 February 23 - Mad Caddies - Troubadour - Los Angeles, Ca  
 February 24 - Tsunami Bomb - Mason Jar - Arizona  
 February 26 - Tsunami Bomb - The Glasshouse - Pomona, Ca  
 February 26 - Taken - Chain Reaction - Anaheim, Ca  
 February 26 - Homegrown - Theatre Of Living Arts - Philadelphia, Pa  
 February 27 - Count The Stars - Theatre Of Living Arts - Philadelphia, Pa  
 February 27 - The Pattern- The Glasshouse - Pomona, Ca  
 February 27 - Hot Rod Circuit- Troubadour - Los Angeles, Ca  
 February 28 - Death Cab For Cutie - Showbox - Seattle, Wa  
 February 28 - Slick Shoes - The Scene - San Diego, Ca  
 February 28 - The Blood Brothers - Chain Reaction - Anaheim, Ca  
 March 1 - Something Corporate- The Glasshouse - Pomona, Ca  
 March 1 - Finch - Soma \_ San Diego, Ca  
 March 1 - The Queers - Cbgb - New York, Ny  
 March 2 - Bane - The Scene - San Diego, Ca  
 March 2 - Something Corporate- House Of Blues - Anaheim, Ca  
 March 2 - Bigwig - Valentines - Albany, Ny  
 March 4 - Interpol - The Trocadero - Philadelphia, Pa  
 March 6 - Leftover Crack - The Huntridge - Las Vegas, Nv  
 March 6 - Voodoo Glow Skulls - North Star - Philadelphia, Pa  
 March 7 - Voodoo Glow Skulls - Cbgb - New York, Ny  
 March 8 - Cky - Theatre Of Living Arts - Philadelphia, Pa  
 March 10 - Dynamite Boy - North Star - Philadelphia, Pa  
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# Make LOVE, NOT WAR' By Dug

Being born the year Albert Einstein and James Dean died makes me a really old romantic fuck. By the late '60s and early '70s, my older sister, the flower child, was letting me tag along to love-ins and listen to Strawberry Alarm Clock. In case you didn't know, a love-in was a gathering of idealistic young people in a local park. Bikers would pound out a beat on upended trash cans while patchouli-scented hippies would play flutes and dance the slow, methodical dervish of the Dead fans.

It was in this milieu that I developed my sense of style and the core of my political beliefs. Dressing in fringed, knee-high moccasins, a serape, and bell bottoms with rainbow inserts in the legs was my idea of fashion. My idea of politics was railing against the devil of my age, the Republican president known as Tricky Dick. It's fittingly ironic that his most memorable photo op was his hunch-backed "victory" pose. He was famous for thrusting his hands in the air with peace signs and gleefully glaring at the audience with his beady little eyes; he was infamous for his CIA-generated enemies list that included half the Democratic party. This human abomination was the leader of the most powerful country in the world in 1969.

The youth of America rose up. We would gather, hand in hand, at local colleges and sing peace songs and make protest speeches. Inevitably, the police or National Guard would arrive

**"Disco, new wave, and punk came and went. Now we belong to a different generation: it's a Woodstock nation where the citizens riot and burn down concession stands...."**

ment. Fleeing from the choking, stinging smoke was a rush in itself. We were standing for something we believed in, linked together in a noble quest to end the war in Vietnam-as well as ending poverty, bigotry, and ecological disaster. I believed in our country and the inherent good in all mankind. Though Nixon turned the guns of the National Guard upon his own people and executed students at Kent State, Jackson State, and at the Chicago Democratic Convention, we always believed we would win in the end. One out of every 30 students in my high school class died in Vietnam. Many of those who didn't die came back broken-like my sister's friend, the tank driver, who would get drunk at the beach and tell us about how they had a game to see who could run over the most

Viet Cong skulls; or my close friend who had the unenviable job of machine-gunning anything that moved in the napalm flames from the safety of a helicopter door.

We did have our successes. Woodstock was a milestone. Half a million people gathered together to prove that a nation of people could exist on music and idealistic dreams. The war churned on and became ever more unpopular as the American people learned that our country wasn't so much the great white hope of freedom as a country scrambling to protect the interests of the rubber industry. The military used the war like Hitler and Mussolini had used the Spanish Civil War: as a testing ground for the latest weapons and strategies. Our Air Force was ecstatic that it could test the new generation of jets against real Russian and Chinese pilots. The orgy of senseless destruction ended when we left and gave the country back to the Vietnamese.

In the end we may have lost the war, but we changed the hearts of the American people with the protests. Some of our troops came home. There were over 50,000 young Americans killed in the war and countless numbers of Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians. There were casualties on the home front as well, as the culture that professed free love, peace, and individuality also brought with it an unhealthy dose of drug and alcohol abuse. Hendrix, Joplin, and Morrison all got sucked into the abyss, while other heroes like Bobby Kennedy

national parks and forests than ever before. He has a "leave no child behind" bill that will drastically cut the funds to schools-leaving every child behind. And he has a bone to pick with the same evil despot that his father picked a bone with. I'm not saying that evil despots should not be removed from power...but if we're getting rid of the likes of Kim Jong Il and Saddam Hussein, let's not forget George Bush Jr. and Dick Cheney.

The colorblind society we envisioned in the '60s has turned into a multicultural hate stew where the slightest misstep is a capital crime. The folksy protest songs of the Vietnam era about peace and love have turned into today's anthems of angst and despair. A society that once put flowers in the barrels of the National Guard's guns is now required to carry a handgun in every glovebox. This is a generation that grew up on cell phones, video games, and computers. Drugs like crack and crystal meth fuel the senseless anger in the inner cities. Our over-caffinated lifestyles have us rushing headlong towards our own Götterdämmerung. Yet amidst all the Sturm und Drang of the new millennium, there is a glimmer of hope. In the first organized protests against the rush to war in Iraq, 200,000 citizens rallied at the Capitol Mall. 80,000 people protested the same day in San Francisco. At the same time, in the ultra-conservative bastion of the Richard Nixon Library in Yorba Linda, 800 people chanted "Impeach Bush."

and Martin Luther King, Jr. got taken out by fear and ignorance. A little bit of America died with the end of the hippie generation.

Disco, new wave, and punk came and went. Now we belong to a different generation: it's a Woodstock nation where the citizens riot and burn down concession stands; it's a crowd that rallies behind a fat guy in a red baseball cap whose biggest statement was "Give me something to break!"; it's a country run by another Republican tyrant, the son of the former head of the CIA. The leader of the most powerful nation in the world today is the king of doublespeak. He has a "clear skies" bill that will allow more air pollution than ever. He has a "healthy forests" bill that will allow more logging in our

While our planet bleeds through the ozone hole over Australia, our president refuses to join the other nations on Earth to stop global warming. Young people climb into trees and risk arrest to keep them from being destroyed. Earth First! members lay their lives on the line to stop the ecological terrorism being visited upon the environment by our president and his oil cronies.

There is a moment in every human's life when the choice they make will change history. That moment is now. The time is yours. Rise up and be heard. I still have a dream. Walk hand in hand in the streets. Love your fellow man. Save the planet. Stop the madness. Make love...not war.

# What I love is...

by Julie Frederickson

"(Angels Wanna Wear My) Red Shoes" is just about perfect for any mood. Elvis used to be disgusted, he got tired of being used—but damn it if he doesn't sound sort of giddy about it. I love The Deftones' lead singer's sneaky, sexy voice. I love Liz Phair's "Only Son": "All these babies are born / To the wrong kinds of people." Amen! What I love is when someone brings a baby to a movie theatre and the baby starts to cry and the parent wisely and immediately leaves said theatre (before I kill them both). Since this is about things I love, I won't detour into things I hate about going to the movies. What I love is the video for "Sabotage"; I never tire of it: the wigs, the hysteria, the running around and waving of arms and accusations and sliding across car hoods and the song itself, all yelling and machine-gun guitar hooks. What I love is how hearing Heart's "Crazy On You" can return me to my 17th summer. "I was a willow last night in a dream / I bent far over a clear running stream." Not sure what Ann and Nancy Wilson were talking about, but it spoke to me, and if Ann said she was crazy on someone, I totally, totally knew what she meant. Boys, crazy, yeah, that was a summer I was familiar with. "Crazy On You" was used most effectively in *THE VIRGIN SUICIDES*, when Kirsten Dunst sneaks out of the house to make out with the hot boy in



What I love is... long walks on the beach. No, scratch that: long chugs of bleach. Well, the smell of bleach. Bleach on my hands, because it means I actually cleaned something. The smell of chlorine on my skin—because chlorine means pools, a hotel pool, hopefully, and hotels spell F-U-N; a strange, crisply sheeted bed and someone who makes it for you the next day, the tiny jars of jam one gets with room service, the tiny bottle of ketchup, a clean bathroom, the little box with a shower cap in it (does anyone use those?), a cake of soap. Cake. What I love is cake. Not carrot cake, which is a big black eye to the cake-eater. You're at a wedding, you've been eyeing the cake, you're feeling golden and bubbly from the champagne... and it's freakin' carrot cake. Dude, that's messed up. Is cake better than pie? You tell me. If you're talking about chicken pie, yes, please. I've always wanted to go to the Chicken Pie Shop on La Palma—one of the many quickly disappearing kitschy joints in Orange County. There's a big chicken on the sign, beckoning us to come on in and eat... uh... him. Here's why I won't because those pies will be teeming with chicken, mean lousy with the stuff. I have a problem with chunks of chicken. If it were a chicken pie filled with just chunks of crust and gravy (a crust pie, if you will), what are we waiting for? We could be digging in to that right now. What I love is finding just the right song at just the right time. I used to listen to Sugar's "Explode and Make Up" all the time. It's the perfect song for when one is tortured and conflicted (and driving). Bob Mould's "Almost SOB-BING" while he's singing. Lately I'm finding that Elvis Costello's

the muscle car (it may not have been a muscle car, but let's just say that it was.) I also thought that the film *CHARLIE'S ANGELS*—a good little movie (don't snicker)—used music very creatively. They used just a snippet of the theme from *MIAMI VICE* when Bosley brandished his gun made out of soap. That made me laugh. "Are you ready?" shouts Jonathan Davis when Lucy Liu kicks Crispin Glover's ass. Am I ready? I've been wondering what I love about love and putting it off so, here goes. What I love is a shared glance across the room, ripe with understanding. "Yes," we say wordlessly. "Sally's famous cheese dip tastes like baked ass." What I love is reading/hearing something and wanting to let the loved one know. "Did you see this? I thought of you when I read it." It's knowing someone else is incensed when the president announces more initiatives to open up pristine wildlife areas for commercial use. It's knowing someone else will be excited about the Japanese candy I found that's shaped like tree stumps. It's waiting for their return at the airport, and when you see them: familiar, safe, looking for you, seeing you and grinning, it's a wonderful thing. It's having someone who finds you amusing and wanting to keep amusing them. It's their laughter that buoys you, and when times are tough, their arms around you that keep you from flying apart. Because no one makes crust pie, and someone's got to be around when you find that out.



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# CORPORATE Valentines

By Jill King

It is coming close to Valentine's Day, and yet again I do not have a significant other. It has become apparent to me that every time it comes close to Valentine's Day my boyfriend of the moment and I just happen to break up. Why? Is it because we feel the necessity to buy each other a gift if we wish to continue our relationship and we both do not want to waste the time or the money? Moreover, why is it that every time I am in a relationship around Valentine's Day I feel the pressure to buy my boyfriend a gift? To me, Valentine's Day is a heartbreaking, money-wasting, overrated, depressing, commercial holiday celebrated to help American industry.

Valentine's Day began as far back as the 5th century in Rome. The first known valentine was sent by a prisoner (Charles, Duke of Orleans) in 1415 to his wife. Valentine's Day was not always a way for corporations to make money, but a giving gesture by someone who loves someone else. The first valentine was made by Esther Howland in 1849 and sold in America. Hallmark came on the Valentine's Day scene in 1930, since selling more than 900 million cards, making Valentine's Day the second-largest card-exchanging holiday (behind Christmas). Why is it that people feel it necessary to buy other people cards and gifts on February 14? Industries and media have instilled into people's brains that Valentine's Day is the only day to express your love for someone else. What better way to express your love than with an extravagant diamond ring, a monstrous teddy bear, or a dozen roses and a simple card (that

costs anywhere from 99 cents to \$10)? So, if this special day rolls around and the person that you are currently dating did not break their banks and waste their time to buy you a gift, you automatically assume that you're not appreciated. Furthermore, you also feel the pressure to buy someone a gift—or otherwise your significant other will assume that you do not care. So, what is Valentine's Day? It is the day on which corporations exploit people by compelling the people to purchase gifts for their loved ones.

I remember when growing up in elementary school that the teachers would make us students make mailboxes out of pink, purple, white, and red construction paper. The teacher would then suggest to the kids to buy valentines and candy to put in the other kids' mailboxes. I remember going to the store with my mom every year and picking out valentines that reflected the current trends (be they Barbie or Power Rangers) and some tasty candy. I always made sure that my valentines were not too suggestive, so that other boys would not get the wrong idea that I had a crush on them. As I got older, you might assume that I would have matured and not have found it necessary to buy people valentines; I did not. Every year the gifts became more extensive, from cards and simple candy in elementary school to roses in middle school to baked goods and roses in high school. Cards could no longer be special like when Charles sent his wife a valentine; and so I, like others, felt the importance to buy gifts for those whom I cared about. The bigger the gift, the more I cared about them! They say

that Christmas is the most suicidal time of year. Well, if I had to choose a time of the year to kill myself and not feel appreciated, it would be Valentine's Day.

Love is the universal language that should be expressed and appreciated every day. If you feel like buying someone a gift or making someone a card, you do not need a fucking holiday to do it; just do it. I am sure that the person would appreciate the intense surprise of the non-holiday gift. As for love, love is an intense emotion (so I have heard; I still think that it doesn't exist) that should not just be projected on one day per year, but everyday. You love the person(s), right? Do something about it; do not wait for a day to excuse your emotions. What is Valentine's Day to me? Valentine's Day is an excuse for people to express their emotions to people they care about because they are too cowardly to do it on another day. And corporations are fully aware of people's need to show others that they care—because they were once people, too. Valentine's Day is the time of year when it is impossible to eat out because all the restaurants are full, when my favorite candy becomes too expensive to purchase, and the flooding of Hallmark cards and the color red becomes the killing of the consumer. So, do something about Valentine's Day this year! Ignore the pestering of the television and magazines that if consumers do not buy someone something on February 14, the consumer does not care about the significant other. Take a stand and say, "I will not participate in any corporate holidays."

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In my years on this Earth, I have lost many loved ones. Some have been taken from me by the big, bad hand of death that from time to time reaches down and plucks people from your life without warning, forever; others by different, more subtle (and seemingly more devious) means. And although they still walk the Earth, it is doubtful that we will ever cross paths again (or would speak a kind word to one another if we ever did). The two most traumatic ways of losing a loved one are death and divorce. I have been through both, and I will let you in on one case in which I will not miss the person that is gone from my life forever.

I had been married for nine years, maybe. (I don't like to think about the details anymore. It's been a while and I don't want to remember them.) I met her when I was 20 years old and fell in love at first sight. She was Japanese, and I was your run-of-the-mill Los Angeles punk rocker from the way back. The first time I saw her, she was wearing skin-tight, black jeans, a Jack Daniel's T-shirt, a red jacket, and creepers. Her hair was jet black and down to her ass, her face almost as white as a geisha's and with bright red lips. And the first time she talked to me? That was it: her gentle voice, her exotic accent...She had me. Even after all the failed relationships I had gone through before, I jumped into this doomed relationship without looking back.

We spent the first few years together doing nothing more than having fun, drinking booze and going to shows. But along the way she was changing me in subtle ways. She wanted more from me as the relationship grew, wanted me to become responsible. In other words, she wanted me to bring in more money. So I started getting REAL jobs. Before that I would go down to San Diego every now and then and join the Mexican day laborers for a week or two building fences and digging ditches. I'd stay for a week or so, then come back and relax. My rent was a hundred dollars a month, and I didn't eat too much, so it was no damn problem. All I needed after that was beer and cigarette money. So I get myself a job and start learning how to live more and more like most other folks. Soon I had a savings account, then a checking account. I started getting jobs telemarketing, and every once in a while I would get a good paycheck if I made my quota. I would cash it and we would celebrate. Like I said, I loved her. She was the only damn person in the world I would have ever done this kind of shit for. And after a while things looked really good: I landed a steady job at a communications company-first as a telephone operator, and then I was promoted to shift supervisor. It was a job that I despised but took so I could bring in more money-so we could go out to more expensive restaurants and such things...all the things I never cared about. I was changing.

And then one day she told me that we had to get married or she was going home to Japan. It was an ultimatum. She wanted a commitment or it was over. Well, I had told myself over the years that I would NEVER get married. Coming from a broken home (and seeing all the other kids I grew up with in the same situation), it seemed absurd to ever

travel down that road. But God damn it, I did it. Yes, I did. You see, I was in love. The small fact that that her visa was about to expire never crossed my mind. The things you ignore when you

aster my marriage was about to become. I unpacked and probably started wondering what my next article for SKRATCH might be. A few days later my wife announced she wanted to live apart.

# A Loved One I Will Not Miss

by Jason Cole

truly love someone and are young and stupid. It is a sad and beautiful state of being that you usually only get to experience once. Maybe one in 10 million young love affairs last, I would guess, maybe less. I wasn't one of the lucky ones.

I went to Vegas with 10 of our friends and tied the knot at a chapel at the Tropicana. It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. Before the wedding I was in one hotel room at the Luxor with my homeboys from the way back, while she was holed up in another room with a group of Japanese girls getting her made up for the ceremony. I stayed sober while all the other guys were getting drunk, stoned, and hyped on crank and God knows what else. When she emerged for the ceremony, I was floored: she looked like a porcelain doll.

And then there I was at the alter, people watching, me sweating. Then came the vows, and she said she would be with me 'til death broke us apart. And then I am saying "I do" and all that shit, and people are clapping. Friends come up and hug you and slap you on the back. Rice is thrown. We had a little party right afterwards: champagne, the works. Then we went back to the hotel room and we had sex right there, while she was in her wedding gown-fetish to the fullest. Too cool. I was happy as a motherfucker. But it wasn't going to last.

We spent another six years, I think, together. I concentrated on my writing. I came close to finishing my first book before we finally divorced, by then having a ton of music journalism articles under my belt. But the writing hadn't made me a penny, and she was getting tired of it, wanted me to quit or hit fast. She was losing patience with my dream of being a writer. (I haven't hit yet, and she's long gone-took off with a senior CPA at the firm of Deloitte and Touche (where she worked) just a few months after her green card cleared.) The last few months we spent together were not filled with fights. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary to me. We traveled to Japan in November of the last year we were together. I spent three weeks traveling the country and spending time with every damn relative she had. It was my fourth trip to Japan. We had a blast, although the travel schedule was hell. (It was the only thing I complained about the whole time.) We arrived home in Los Angeles in early December, and I had no idea of the impending dis-

I tried to hold it together, I really tried. I suggested counseling: no deal. A few days later she moved out to a friend's house. Right before Christmas. Nice timing, I thought. This was 1999. I spent Christmas alone with a bottle and not one phone call from her. I stopped drinking after that and tried once again to patch things up, but she wouldn't come home. All those years spent together wasted. I couldn't even have a decent conversation with the woman. When the ball dropped for 2000, I was alone and wondering why I should still stick around when I could just end it all quickly. I had a bottle of pills in front of me, the one I keep for when I want to check out. (But I kept going somehow. And now the pills in that bottle are expired; I doubt they will work anymore.) The Valentine's Day that followed? I sat in the rain smoking cigarettes trying to call her-even though I had already signed the divorce papers. I never did get in touch with her.

I learned later about the guy at the CPA firm, a Japanese guy. After she got her green card she decided it was time to take off. By that time I had become operations manager of the company I was working for. I was bringing in good money, but it still wasn't enough. I had spent thousands of dollars paying off her student loans. In the end, I found that she had opened several different credit card accounts in my name that I never knew about and had run them up to their limits. I had a lawyer make sure she was responsible for all of them. As recently as a few months ago my credit got screwed to hell because of one that we didn't find that she left unpaid after she skipped town and went back to Japan.

The big business man she left me for dumped her after three months. Everything went downhill for her after that. I learned these things from outside sources-namely, her best and most beautiful girlfriend, who invited me over to her house a few months after my divorce. I was shocked when she took off her clothes after a few drinks. The sex was great, I must say. And her friend was much better-looking than my ex ever was. I will not miss the woman that once was my wife. I have found much greener pastures, my friends-of that, you can be damn sure.

Never give up. And happy Valentine's Day.

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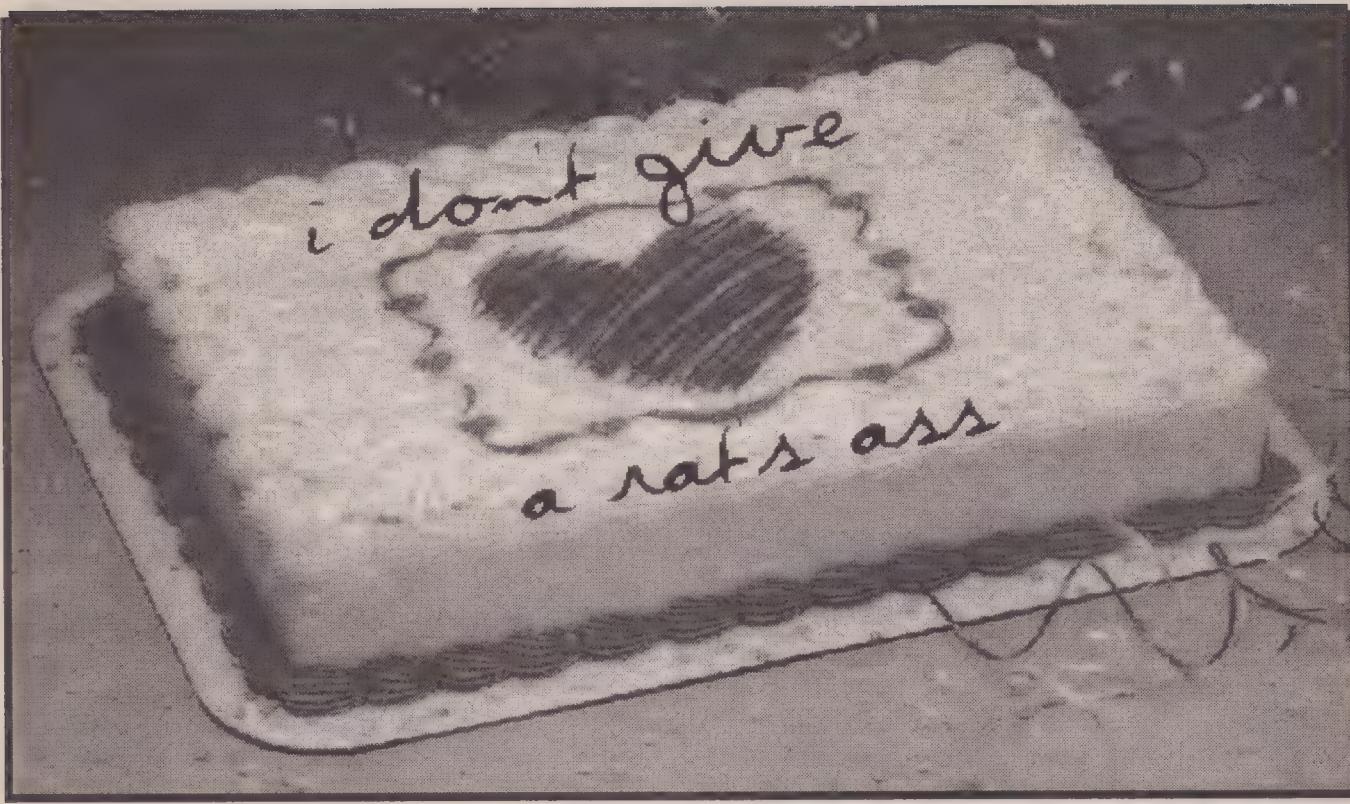
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by Jessica Torres

Love. It's that warm sensation you get between your...Wait, that's something else. I don't know what love is. The closest thing I ever got to love was last night when I ate half a pint of Ben & Jerry's. Yeah, that was some good lovin'. I'm all up for love. I hear it's pretty cool. You get laid a lot. Until then, for the sake of all clichéd papers written on anti-love, here are the reasons why I think love (or rather, the people who are in love) suck more than an episode of AMERICAN IDOL:

#### Next stop: PDAland

I figured out why the lines are so goddamned long at Disneyland: because you and your girlfriend are exchanging bodily fluids right in front of my fucking face—and you don't seem to move until she gets it right. For God's sake, the children! What about the children? I say we make it a mandatory law that, after the ride announces, "Remain seated please," they also announce, "Not only is your acne a distraction, but your make-out session makes passengers want to jump off our ride. Please keep your tongue inside your mouth"—and make anyone who breaks this rule listen to the new Mariah Carey CD.

#### Two weeks and "I love you"

I bet that, when dating, two weeks feels like two years; but until you reach that yearly mark I see no reason to buy out the Beanie Baby section at your local Hallmark. I can't even keep track of my period, let alone how long I've been dating someone.

#### Girls named Beth

Just when I thought I was going to get some, you start dating someone named Beth.\* That's fine, except, "I can't say her name without fucking yawning" (as quoted by a friend). My dog has a more lively personality than she does. She probably drinks frappacinos, wears Roxy, and thinks Vin Diesel from XXX is soooo hot. How predictable. I hope you and the G.F. are having shitty sex. (But shitty sex is better than no sex. Alas, I lose again.)

#### We're in love. I'll see you after gym class.

I use to sneak chapters of CATCHER IN THE RYE during chemistry, and you used to write letters to your boyfriend of three days. High school sucks, but it sucks even more when the ugly people find someone that will date them and they start making out in front of your locker. Or when you can't see what the teacher has written on the board because your fucking flowers are in the way. It's kind of hard getting into class when you two are breaking fire-safety laws by blocking the entrance to class with your tongue-wrestling.

#### I didn't know you had the vocab of a newborn.

If you thought baby talk was annoying, try listening to it while you're driving around in San Francisco, lost, hungry, and in a car with the same three people you've been with for the past eight hours straight. The only

person that can save you is on her cell phone, saying, "love you, too" to her boyfriend more than the number of times Dick Cheney has been in the hospital. Or take the case of my friend, who handed her boyfriend a cupcake, to which he replied: "I already have my cupcake." Talk about a toothache, or a fucking headache....

#### It's diarrhoea, not AIDS.

You bought her a LILO AND STITCH stuffed animal just because she was sick. You said, "I just wanted to drop everything and run to her side." Calm the fuck down. The girl has food poisoning, not the Ebola virus. I don't know about you, but when I get the runs I sure as hell don't like someone giving me kisses with a fucking stuffed animal. What ever happened to just handing over the Pepto Bismol?

#### Promise me you won't give me a promise ring.

Last time I checked, this wasn't the little house on the prairie. I haven't seen so many young people engaged since that special I saw on polygamy on PBS. Why people hand others promise rings at 18 gives me that puzzled expression I'm sure George W. Bush gets when he's trying to add two plus two together. If you're really going to get married, why don't you just wait for an engagement ring? What's that? Oh, you're only handing her a promise ring so she can blow you? Now I understand.

#### When you try to be romantic, it kills the mood.

You told me you and your girlfriend liked to light candles, draw a bath, and read poetry to one another. I don't know about you, but I can't understand three words in most poems. I hate poetry. It's complicated, and it doesn't make any sense. If you have something to tell me, just be direct. I don't have any patience for it. Instead of my energy going to the right places, it's used trying to analyze some dead guy's love letter. Is this Language Arts? Why the fuck are you reading me Shakespeare? Don't try to get so deep about it, when all you have to say is, "I think you're really hot." Sprinkling rose petals isn't exactly doing it for me, either. Call me crazy, but seeing a fucking mess such as torn flowers everywhere doesn't exactly get me hot and bothered; it just makes me want to yell at you for making a mess. I hope you know where the vacuum is so you can clean that shit up.

#### Worse than Sandra Bullock's last movie

Nothing is worse than when you break up with your significant other and you go after my ice cream. Get over it. Do something. Go shopping, eat, masturbate. Occupy yourself. I know she was "the one," and every time her name gets mentioned you complain about how it feels like someone has put lemons on your open wounds. Who was your last girlfriend, Wolverine? Why the fuck do you have open wounds? Shouldn't you be at a hospital, then?

\*Some of the names used in this article have been changed to protect...oh, wait: no, they haven't. I don't give a rat's ass.

# VALENTINE'S DAY

by Mark Whittaker

...a neural travesty for little kid nerds and punk rockers everywhere-not to mention it's a totally made-up holiday to support the waning greeting-card industry. I mean, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Secretary's Day, etc. etc.? Same fucking thing.

Think about it: You're this misfit at eight, a superstar waiting happen, basically, but you have to go through the slings and arrows (no pun intended...you know, because of Cupid and his dopey bow) before managing to break out and say, "Screw this, I'm going to be so not you it isn't even funny"-and off you go to that great mosh pit and punk zine on the horizon. February 14th comes around, and you were up all night the day before writing out every asshole's name in your class on the back of perforated cards purchased for a dollar at the local drug store just because you have to. Maybe this time, you think, that cute person you have had your eye on since the first bell rang will notice you this time. So you actually get them a "real" card-with like an envelope and stuff-and write out nervous prose, such as: "You are cool. I like you. Happy Valentine's Day. Mrs. Walker is a dork!" The rest or the kids that don't hang out with you at lunch and give you a hard time for liking the stuff played on the weird college radio station rather than Mighty 105 ("super hits all the time") get those dumb, square cards with images of Scooby Doo and Chewbacca and shit on them that read "You're a Groovy Valentine" and "May the Force Be with You, Valentine." All you do for them is write their name in the "To" field and write yours respectfully in the "From" one. Last year's Valentine's Day was so Charlie Brown for you it left a scar (that you have even to this day). Like six cards and a rock. Yeah, happy Valentine's Day to you, too, man!

So you wake up on the joyous day, and already it starts in. Mom has this big card waiting for you with lacy ruffles all over it,

and Dad could give two craps about the whole day except the chocolate and possible nookie from your mom later on. But that shouldn't even be mentioned, because this day is so gross to begin with. At the bus stop kids are wearing red and exchanging cards and gifts already. And there you stand, wishing Godzilla would appear to crush all of the popular kids and clique members with their phony baloney "Oh, I just have so many cards!" and "Derek Johnson is going to be my valentine" and whatever. Basically, they know you're odd man/woman out, so they put on the show even bigger when you step on board the bus and have to sit in the back with the other losers who say shit like, "I wish I had a machine gun so I could kill everyone today." You just wanted Godzilla, a much cooler response and solution to this horrid day.

When you get to school, you know you're going to have to dole out the drug-store sentiments and hope that the one card for your sweetheart will go over well. Your classroom is all done up in red hearts and Cupids and all that mushy rot. Easter is cool because you get to color eggs and those marshmallow peeps are good. Christmas fucking rocks. Halloween is, like, the best because you can dress up as an axe murderer and pretend to hatchet up everyone in your school during the costume parade. But Valentine's Day? Unless you're a sap or one of the wonder boys or girls who get piles of cards and crap on their desk from other saps, this day is a horrible excuse to rub in that you are an unpopular mollusk in class 2-A and that's why you spend recess alone most of the time. It's like gym or PE or whatever you want to call it: some kids aren't meant to be physically able to run like that or swim well or look good with their shirts off playing basketball. At that age you don't see any light at the end of the grade-school tunnel. (But when art school, punk rock, and beer hits you later

on, all you do is look back on those moments and laugh.) More fuel for the flame, so to speak.

That moment arrives when your teacher says it is time to give out valentines to everyone, and your heart races and sinks all at the same moment. That kid you like is sitting there all unaware of what is about to hit them: a super duper card from yours truly! And will this be another Charlie Brown Valentine's Day for you? Who knows? Actually...who cares? It's Friday, which means you can skateboard all weekend and forget about it. So you bust out the bag of perforated cards for the lot and the big one for your crush and begin handing them out. Yesterday in class everyone spent some time making mailboxes to put the vast amount of cards and crap in them all decorated with hearts and all. You put a picture of Cupid with an arrow through his head and something like "Metallica Rules" or whatever. As you walk down the lanes from desk to desk, you notice that most kids have their mailboxes filled to the brim. Some even got big Hershey's kisses-those really big ones-and big cards and all that. Some folks drop by your desk, but it seems they are just dropping in those cheap, square cards that you bought. Oh, well. You slip the big card in your crush's mailbox and quickly sit down. You dump out your box and see a few cards and another rock. Man!

That's when your crush reads your card and looks back at you. Was that a smile you saw? It was quickly cut short when the teacher comes by to admire their card from you and reads it. The teacher's expression changes from warm to cold.

"Who wrote that I am a dork?!" she bellows. Oh, man. And lame St. Patrick's Day is just around the corner-wearing green and smiley-face shamrocks and shit. Ugh!

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# what is Love? ?

By Brian Spiegel



"Romance is dead. It was a sad acquisition in a hostile takeover by Hallmark and Disney, homogenized, then sold off piece by piece."—Lisa Simpson.

I have not been very lucky in love. With the amount of girls I've hung out with in my life, I should be some sort of love expert guy. This isn't to say I'm completely clueless; I've learned some stuff along the way. Honestly, though, I am no closer finding the answer to what love is than I am to finding the meaning of that Flaming Lips song about robots. I've spent years doing what I thought was right, only to be hurt in the end...sometimes even in the beginning. I've done that whole friend-crush thing so much I know the drill like the back of my hand: get close to the girl, the girl comes to cry to you about her boyfriend, you get to hear about how she and her

boyfriend had really good make-up sex. Next thing you know you're up at 2 a.m. writing an article about love for a music magazine.

What you really have to ask is this: What I felt for these women, was that love? While my more experienced friends say "no," I beg to differ. More than once I've had that urge at three in the morning to drive around listening to The Ataris or The Lyndsey Diaries (I would put on Sigur Ros, but I'm afraid I would fall asleep and fly off a bridge into Long Beach Harbor); I've done the whole write the letter-throw it away thing; I've felt the joy of love and the pain of suffering. Is that not love? If what I felt was not love, then what was it? Obsession? Heartache? Emo?

Well, while I did think about the girls a lot, I was never obsessed. I never carved their names into my chest or stood outside their window with a boom box playing a Peter Gabriel song. Heartache? Technically, a heart cannot ache. If it does, you are probably having a heart attack and should proceed to the nearest hospital immediately. Emo? Well, I never really got into the whole emo thing. I mean, I like the music, but I still know only half the lyrics to most Dashboard songs. I'm more of a punk/pop, rap/metal, emo/core, throwback/nu-wave/modern rock guy myself.

If you think about it, "love" is such a tricky word. There are so many variations on the term that to adequately define it would take five or 10 minutes—and I don't have that kind of time. I mean, I love my family, but not in that kind of way. I love my friends, I love my roommate, I love my dog, I loved ADAPTATION, I love Vanessa Carlton's lyric-driven piano ballads (really!...but have I stayed up nights thinking about them? No (except for maybe the dog—but that was just worrying what exactly he was ripping up in my room).

While we as individuals may not know what love is, we can always turn to TV to find the true definition. Look, on the WB there's a women who loves a guy but is embarrassed because she thinks she's sooo fat and she turns to anorexia—but the guy finally tells her he likes her for who she is. On NBC, DATELINE is telling us that love leads to murder—then during a commercial break we discover that women will not like you unless you dress like a cool guy in some made-up high school with only beautiful people. Somewhere on ABC a fat guy is reduced to comic relief because, c'mon, fat people can't be sexy! Then on Lifetime there is a movie about how your best guy friend may be deranged and stalking you. If TV has taught us anything, it's that there is not only no hope for love, but that we have to suspect everyone and everything—even if we DO love them. We love to watch those tabloid shows about how some celebrity's life is falling apart. We take pleasure in their break-ups. We hope that Britney and Justin will find only pain, not love. What a wonderful culture we live in.

So, how about trying to find what love is in the movies? Well, if you happen to watch 90% of the movies out there, you will realize that all love stories follow a simple premise. (WARNING: the following contains spoilers for most chick flicks coming out in the next 20 years.) Here we go: Man and woman meet, fall in love over something quirky, marry, something goes wrong in the relationship, one of them leaves, during a musical sequence (Sade is appropriate) both characters (who happen to be looking out at the rain at the same time) realize that they need each other, they meet again, big embrace, cue music, kiss, cut to marriage, after vows they walk towards car, something wacky happens, cue credits. Well, even though the story worked out well for Freddie Prinze, Jr. and Reese Witherspoon, what is that supposed to teach us about love? Nothing, really: it's make believe—you know, like Santa Claus or the War on Terror. Yet, we (meaning mostly girls) strive for perfection like that.

But I feel like I keep getting off the subject. What is love? Here's my guess: it's the feeling of utter and complete happiness and content with someone you're close to, if even for one second. It can last for a long time or subside quickly; but when you are in that person's arms, everything is perfect in the world: no bills, no war, and no grades—just her/him. Now, granted, that's just my opinion. I suggest you take a moment out of your hectic day to think of your own definition of love. Also, cherish the moments of love. Let your soul feel it. You'll miss it when it's gone. The point that people are missing is that love does not have a definition—and that it should not be defined. It's just there; you can't explain it. And no matter what, no TV show or movie or emo song can tell you what you feel inside your heart. (Except Budweiser; they also know the truth: it's all about the beer you drink.)

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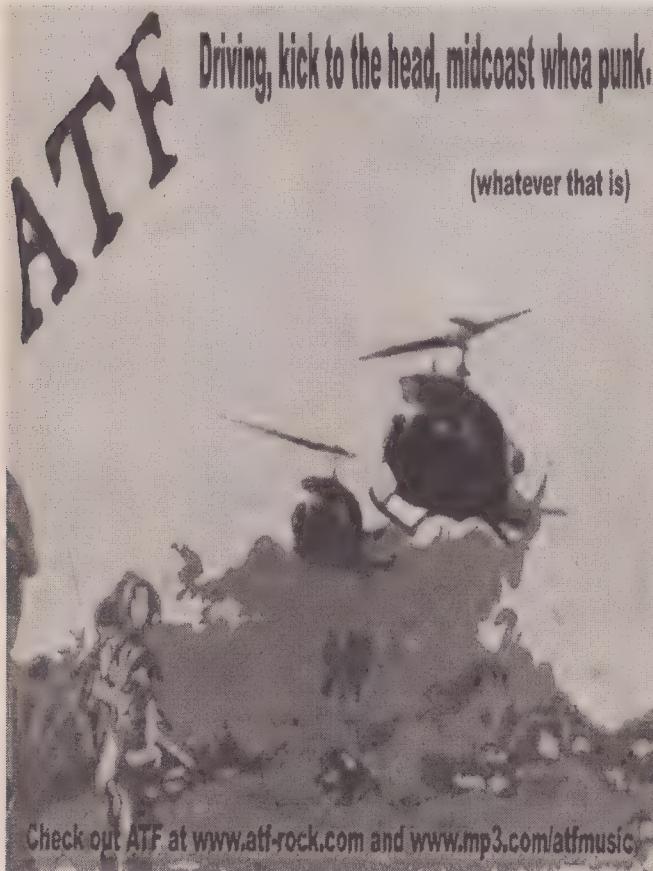
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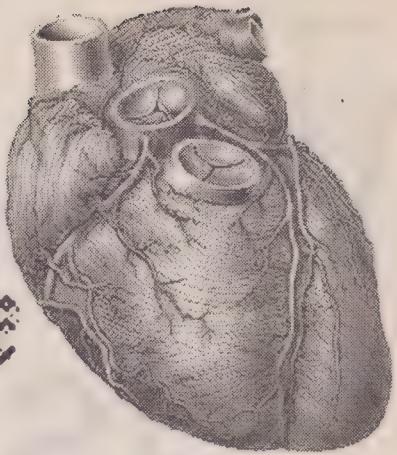
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## **WORDS FROM THE**



**name: Ryan Patterson**

**company/title: Initial Records VP, Black Cross guitarist**

**love is: Dead? If not, it's caring about someone as much or more than you care about yourself. Desire to be with and be a part of that person's life, joys, struggles, etc. With inanimate or intangible things, Webster's refers to it as "an intense emotional attachment."**

**Valentine's day is: As good a reason as any to listen to Hayden and bum-out.**

**favorite lovemaking memory: Never kiss and tell.**

**I love (top 5): Hardcore/Punk, Design, Film, Vegan Food, Louisville.**

**I'm in love with: A strong, intelligent, talented, gutsy, beautiful young woman, who doesn't love me. But isn't that always how it goes?**

**name: Kathi Haruch**

**company/title: The Syndicate**

**love is: an egg and cheese bagel**

**Valentine's day is: Feb 14 duh**

**favorite lovemaking memory: you know that one time with that guy at that place wow.**

**I love (top 5): white out tape, pens, my silver swingline, berry cherrios, the fact that all of my office supplies match.**

**I'm in love with: Staples**

**name: Mikey Sabs**

**company/title: Singer and Guitar of Limitpoint**

**love is: Something that makes you crazy, expressive, happy, sad, pissed, love life to the fullest...love makes the world go around hehe :)**

**Valentine's day is: A day for card and flower companies to make money at least once outta the year. It was fun in grade school...remember? All those little scooby doo or charlie brown cards that were 3 inches by 4 inches...with the to: and from: sections to fill in. I gave like 60 out a year!**

**favorite lovemaking memory: All of them...I don't have just one favorite :)**

**I've got many...I'm not too crazy when it comes to that. It's strictly the bedroom baby!**

**I love (top 5): My girlfriend (Erica), my family (Nick, Gina, Linda and Carmelo Sabatella), my friends (Elmo, Shaw, Dion, Vicki, Jessica, Teresa, Fred, Joe Walz, Country Neal @ Aggravated Music, Justin Metaphor, Dawn Heiser and all our friend's bands...you know who you are!), Thai Food and Touring...I love to travel and meet new people...it's amazing!**

**I'm in love with: LIFE...all of it...my girlfriend is awesome...she's sooo sweet and supportive...I am lucky to have someone like that for Valentines Day :)**

**I'm also in love with music like Green Day, Alkaline Trio, Saves The Day, Jimmy Eat World, Jason Mraz, Dashboard Confessional, Recover and Limitpoint's new music...I am also in love with Jenny McCarthy, Denise Richards, Jennifer Love Hewitt hahaha...I know I am forgetting things...oh well! Finally I love all the people that have supported Limitpoint especially in the past year and a half...THANK YOU! [www.limitpoint.net](http://www.limitpoint.net)**

**Bill and Skratch Mag RULE!!!!!!**

**name: Kamy**

**company/title: Desolation Angels Bassist**

**love is: Painful, hard to find, and easy to lose**

**Valentine's day is: very depressing**

**favorite lovemaking memory: watching**

**I love (top 5): My band, my family, my friends, my love, my cat**

**name:** Angela Brandt

**company/title:**

**love is:** a word that describes an emotion and a word that is over-used by people- I love my mom, but I also love the McRib. It has lost some of its meaning.

**Valentine's day is:** a Hallmark card conspiracy to make people that aren't with anyone on a specific day feel like shit and make those involved with someone feel obligated to buy them stupid useless crap to show their "love" favorite lovemaking memory: None

**I love (top 5):** my family, my friends, rock n roll, my animals, potato tacos

**I'm in love with:** the thought of being in love

**name:** Melysa Martinez

**company/title:** Huh?

**love is:** Unconditional..therefore, it does not exist

**Valentine's day is:** Just like any other day.

**favorite lovemaking memory:** N/A

**I love (top 5):** Sex, music, food, friends and family, sex!

**I'm in love with:** Music

**name:** Barbara Ann

**company/title:** Pretty Face Records/owner

**love is:** @FIRST SIGHT!

**Valentine's days is:** everyday in my world.

**favorite lovemaking memory:** I'm not going to tell you:

**I love (top 5):** fm, fm, fm, fm, fm

**I'm in love with:** fm

**name:** J. Johnson

**company/title:** Emotional doormat

**love is:** Lies, everything I despise...

**Valentine's day is:** Another reason for me to be bitter.

**favorite lovemaking memory:** All of the ones I can remember...

**I love (top 5):** The Clash, sleeping, eating, good music in general, and women.

**I'm in love with:** Rock 'n' roll, whoa-oh...

**name:** Tim McVicker

**company/title:** Earache/US Production Manager

**love is:** A beautiful thing, seriously.

**Valentine's day is:** Another Hallmark conspiracy.

**favorite lovemaking memory:** On the subway at 3 am.

**I love (top 5):** Beer, sociopathic music, Britney Spears, early 80's gore flicks, weed that doesn't give me a headache.

**I'm in love with:** my future ex-wife.

**Name:** Marcia Taylor

**Company/Title:** Skratch scribbler with age on her side

**Love is:** wanting what's best for the other person, even if it's not in YOUR best interest.

**Valentine's Day is:** usually disappointing if you wait around for a guy to do something romantic, although in 1978 I saw Elvis Costello perform at the Fox Theatre in San Diego, and it remains one of the best shows I ever saw.

**favorite lovemaking memory:** See my tell-all memoir, soon to be published

## IM IN LOVE WITH MY ABILITY TO CONTROL PEOPLE.

chapter by chapter, in the pages of SKRATCH. It's all about location, location, location.

I love: my kids, riding my Blaster and my motorcycle until I'm too tired to ride any more, being outdoors, listening to music, laughing.

I'm in love with: a former high school classmate whom I met again recently after MANY years - doesn't that sound like a fairy tale?

**name:** Sir Millard Mulch

**company/title:** San Francisco's Most Modern Thinker!

**love is:** Ordo Ab Chao

**Valentine's day is:** Not mentioned anywhere in The Bible, therefore it's not a Holy-day and I don't celebrate it.

**favorite lovemaking memory:** I'm celibate and I drink milk.

**I love (top 5):** Cheddar, Swiss, American, Monterey, Provolone! I'm in love with: My ability to control people.

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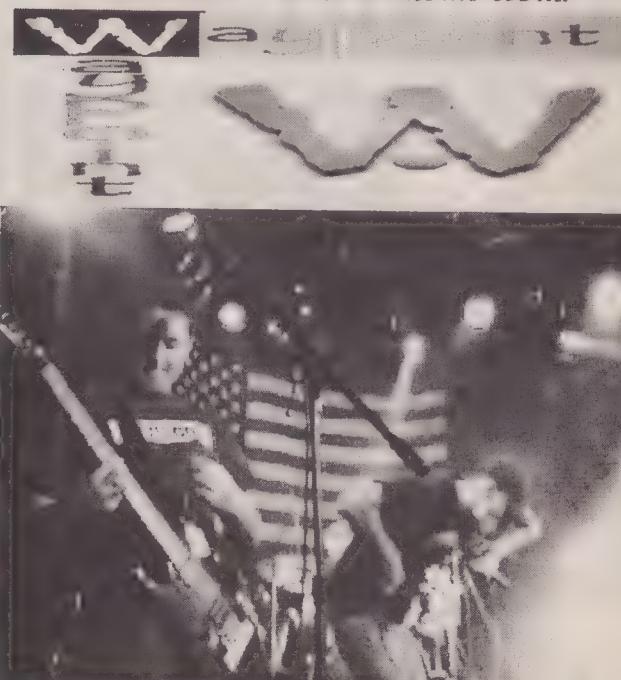
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# ONEWORD SOLUTION

portrait of a decrepit nation

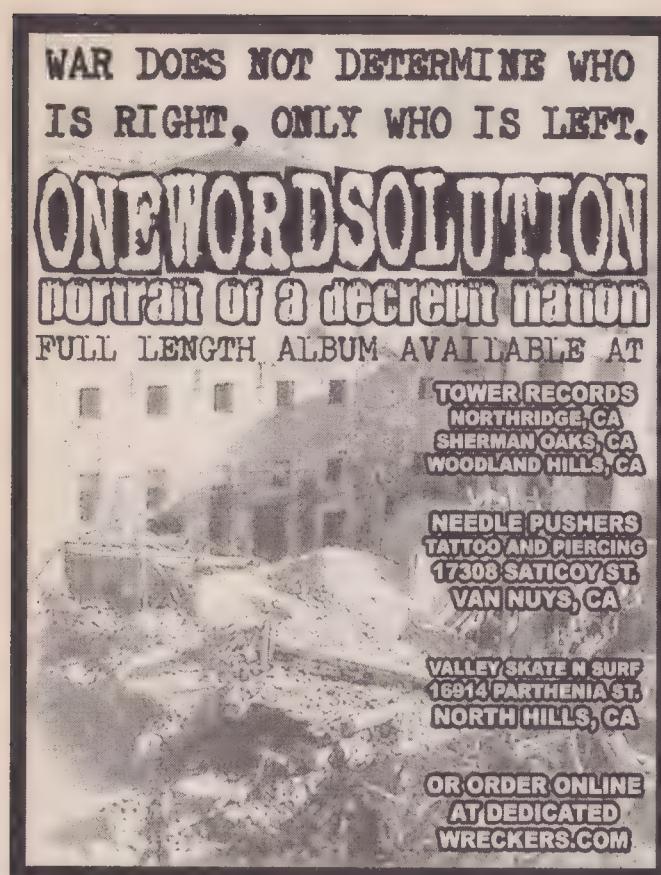
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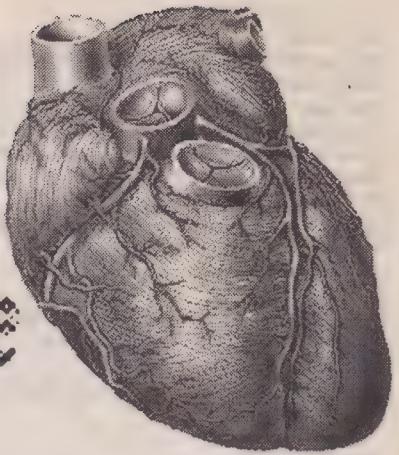
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## WORDS FROM THE



name: Gregory Moore

company/title: Skratch/"illiterate copy editor" or something like that  
love is:something I hope to experience again at SOME fucking point in this stupid life

Valentine's day is: a bunch of fucking nonsense (though harmless nonsense if you don't take it seriously)

favorite lovemaking memory: I've got some good ones, but they're all rather old — and so I'd rather not dwell on the past.

I love (top 5): top 5 WHAT? How about writers? In no order: Stoppard, Nabokov, Cortazar, Borges, Sterne

I'm in love with: no one, alas

name: fernando pinto

company/title: elevator music, a doer of everything  
love is: treating other living beings as special as we do ourselves...

Valentine's day is: just another reason to do something wonderful

favorite lovemaking memory: anytime I don't have any expectations

I love (top 5): to be alive, be appreciative, make love in perfect harmony, to cook, be creative...

I'm in love with: chrisine bobbish, and all good energy..

name: Jilidoe

company/title: Student, book cleaner

love is: nothing. It doesn't exist.

Valentine's day is: a corporate holiday, where corporations exploit

People's need for love to make a profit.

favorite lovemaking memory: On the freeway

I love (top 5): The Clash, Rancid, the idea of love itself and that it might exist, burritos, and tight pants:

I'm in love with: Josh.

LOVE IS SOMETHING I HOPE TO EXPERIENCE AGAIN AT SOME FUCKING POINT IN THIS STUPID LIFE.

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name: Gary Nielsen

company/title:

love is: Juicy,sweaty all the time

Valentine's day is: the time to try something new with your lover.  
favorite lovemaking memory: It had to be the time on the staircase in front of a huge plateglass window overlooking Central Park, man was that hot, I'm getting hard just thinking about it.

I love (top 5): Nipples in my mouth, when she moans in my ear, long hard strokes, watching her bend over, waking up and doing it again.

I'm in love with: Axis 1

**name:** Jason  
**company/title:** Equal Vision Records, Publicist  
**love is:** a kick in the jimmie  
**Valentine's day is:** lame  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** dude, that's personal.  
**I love (top 5):** led zeppelin, hot water music, vinyl, 4 track recordings and sloppy joes.  
**I'm in love with:** skateparks

**name:** Chuck  
**company/title:** Basement Records  
**love is:** me & my wife  
**Valentine's day is:** Friday the 14th  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** Was with my wife, that's why I married her.  
**I love (top 5):** my wife, my wife, my wife, my wife & Leigh Anne

**LOVE IS A LICENSE TO FART WITHOUT SHAME AROUND THE HOUSE ALL THE TIME, AND THE BEST EXCUSE TO NOT PUT YOUR PANTS ON UNTIL 2PM ON WEEKENDS**

**I'm in love with:** my wife Leigh Anne

**name:**  
**company/title:** C.E.O. Morphius Records  
**love is:** A license to fart without shame around the house all the time, and the best excuse to not put your pants on until 2PM on weekends  
**Valentine's day is:** the day when chocolate & flowers justify screwing  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** today was pretty sweet. Afterwards we wandered around the apartment trying to identify which fluids had caused each stain on our furniture. Co-habitation rules!  
**I love (top 5):** Dave Chappelle's new Show, especially the "Black White Supremacist" bit on the 1st episode where those rednecks heads explode when they see that he's black, the new Youth Gone Mad Featuring Dee Dee Ramone CD that Morphius is distributing for trend is dead—it's actually better than several Ramones albums, watching my girlfriend's niece throw food on the ground and then point to it, laughing hysterically. Yesterday she rammed her finger up her dad's nose and made it bleed. Not even a year old yet...but such a good start, watching Furio terrorize everybody with the baseball bat at that whorehouse when he first comes to New Jersey. His fake Italian accent is excellent. 2nd season Sopranos is so good it makes me want to cry, seeing people on hallucinogens at convenience stores or on ski lifts.  
**I'm in love with:** International supermodel Kieran Landers (plus my fiancee of course)

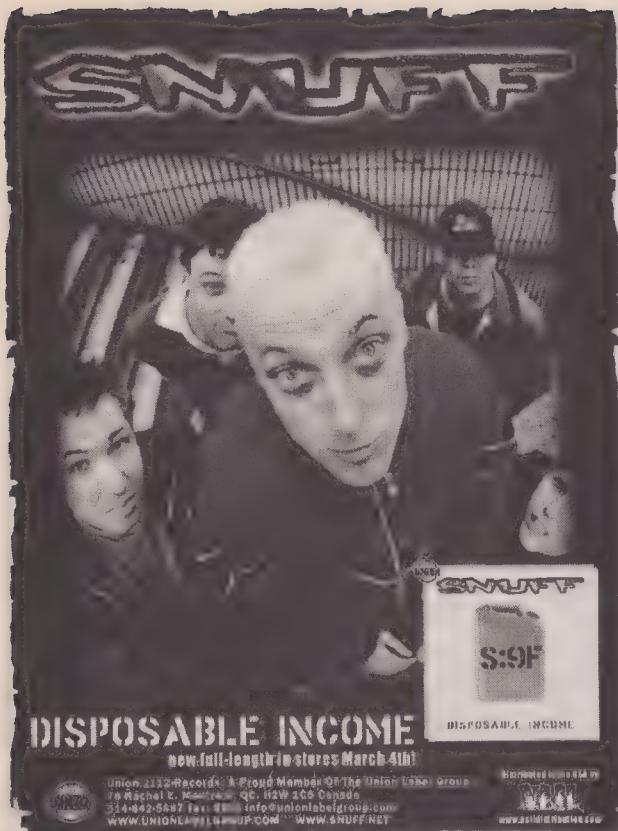
**name:** Stephen  
**company/title:** Drummer, Louden Swain  
**love is:** not caring if I pick my nose or fart  
**Valentine's day is:** a shitty holiday designed by our capitalist society to force us into spending more money... But have you bought your Valentine the new Louden Swain CD yet?  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** ah...that time in Prague with the Swedish Bikini Team...  
**I love (top 5):** my band, my girlfriend, Mrs. Field's Cookies, my drums, and Sprite  
**I'm in love with:** music of course

**name:** Julie Chadwick  
**company/title:** Helicopter helicopter  
**love is:** Being able to see someone puke, and still think they are the best thing in the world.  
**Valentine's day is:** Corporate bullshit  
**I love (top 5):** toast, chimpanzees, elephants, my rock band, my family  
**I'm in love with:** Mr. Chris Zerby

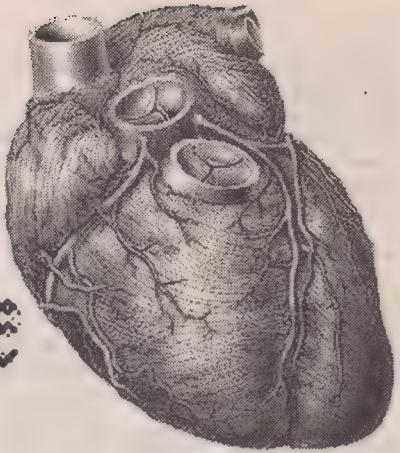
**name:** Veronica Amador  
**company/title:** article/photo contributor to Skratch  
**love is:** living like heaven is on earth  
**Valentine's day is:** the day you can expect to wait an hour and a half before you're seated  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** dancing on the top floor of an empty parking lot in the middle of the night.  
**I love (top 5):** Robrich Sarthou Slim, Aside From... (my band), my daddy

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## WORDS FROM THE



**name:** Chris Murray  
**company/title:** Bluebeat Lounge/one man ska band  
**love is:** the flame that warms the soul  
**Valentine's day is:** a windfall for Hallmark  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** when I knew my life had changed forever  
**I love (top 5):** nice people, playing music, writing songs, the great outdoors, coffee  
**I'm in love with:** my wife

**name:** Annette Ovanessian  
**company/title:** when it is shared mutually  
**Valentine's day is:** Overrated  
**Favorite lovemaking memory:** My memory is somehow fading...  
**I love (top 5):** Music, vinyl, family, honest friends and concerts.  
**I'm in love with:** Good music, because it never fails me

**name:** Ilka  
**company/title:** Fly PR  
**love is:** being happy with yourself and not allowing other people's opinions to effect your happiness  
**Valentine's day is:** a lame-ass, Hallmark fabricated bullshit, capitalist pig holiday- but if someone sends a card, flowers or chocolates I am not so self righteous that I won't thoroughly appreciate them and sincerely thank the person  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** all of them "out-of-doors," wild and frisky moments  
**I love (top 5):** wilderness, partying, loud music (and all music really), sex (especially gratification), being fit and healthy (not that I am in fact)  
**I'm in love with:** freedom

**name:** Peter Bottomley  
**company/title:** Skyscraper Media, publicist  
**love is:** anything you like so much it becomes an obsession  
**Valentine's day is:** a \$\$\$ day  
**I love (top 5):** cats, skiing, chocolate, music, my wife  
**I'm in love with:** Nissa, my wife

**name:** Reverend Buster Chopp  
**company/title:** Elvis Disciples / Drum God  
**love is:** another word for defeat  
**Valentine's day is:** an excuse to force anal sex on your girlfriend  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** on my couch in 1997 with a Denny's orange juice carafe and a bottle of Jergens  
**I love (top 5):** vicodin, profanity, firearms, Pai Gow poker, girls with their own condoms  
**I'm in love with:** my Craftsman power tools

**name:** Mark A. Whitaker  
**company/title:** Skratch/photographer/journalist?  
**love is:** Blind  
**Valentine's day is:** Too Commercialized  
**favorite lovemaking memory:**  
**I love (top 5):** Rock n Roll, skateboarding, photography, music  
**I'm in love with:** Shakira

**name:** Kathleen Rivas  
**company/title:** student  
**love is:** unconditional  
**Valentine's day is:** an excuse to eat a lot of chocolate from heart-shaped boxes  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** I'm too innocent to answer this  
**I love (top 5):** let's make this cheesy: I love my family, friends, concerts, cd player, and extra polar ice gum.  
**I'm in love with:** music

## FAVORITE LOVEMAKING SESSION: FINISHED HAVING THE BEST LOVE MAKING SESSION EVER WHEN THE (NOW EX) GIRLFRIEND LET OUT A LITTLE QUEEF.

**name:** Shane Frans  
**company/title:** Guitarist for BUDDY REVEL  
**love is:** Sometimes it's good and sometimes it can be the wrist.  
**Valentine's day is:** Time to show the one you care for that you actually care.  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** to many to remember  
**I love (top 5):** my wife and my guitar  
**I'm in Love with:** same.

**name:** Timmy Hansell  
**company/title:** Vagrant Records/New Media  
**love is:** Inserting the sausage into the hair pie in a romantic kinda way!  
**Valentine's day is:** When your neighbor's won't get mad if the bed posts are banging into the wall, because they're rumpin' like roosters too!  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** Finished having the best love making session ever when the (now ex) girlfriend let out a little queef. Needless to say... I was floating on thin air.  
**I love (top 5):** The show COPS, soft toilet paper, my parental units, punkbands.com, and the rapper 50 Cent.  
**I'm in love with:** The fact that I have the best love making memory out of any others that were submitted!

**name:** Sean Striegel  
**company/title:** House of Blues / Talent Buyer  
**love is:** Intoxicating  
**Valentine's day is:** a made up holiday but one I am more than happy to participate in with my wife. Since we had our baby last July I just can't seem to do enough for my wife.  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** Heroes (Inside Joke, but a ton of fun)  
**I love (top 5):** Erin and Mia, Music, Friends, Sleep, and whatever else sounds good at the time. Damn! This sounds like a fucking love fest.  
**I'm in love with:** Erin and Mia

**name:** Anthony Nokes  
**company/title:** Z Nokes Design  
**love is:** Not having to ask "What did you say your name was?"  
**Valentine's day is:** A sinister plot by chocolatiers and florists to gouge the general public.  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** Saying only the correct name for the entire session.  
**I love (top 5):** Wife, Daughter, Pilsner Urquell, Laphroaig, Billy Mays (the Oxy-Clean guy)  
**I'm in love with:** Melinda Jean Davis Nokes (whew)

**name:** Jose R.  
**company/title:** n/a  
**love is:** whatever u want it to be  
**Valentine's day is:** being together with the one u love  
**favorite lovemaking memory:** first time with my girlfriend  
**I love (top 5):** family, friends, punk rawk, guitars, myself

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# THE STITCHES



The Stitches

Interview and photos by Anarchy Alicia  
Photos by Mark Giddens

The evening is January 17, 2003, and I am headed to Los Angeles to interview The Stitches Tonight the band headlines the Garage, and the other bands on the bill are The Crowd and The Orphans. Before going over to the Garage I met The Stitches at Juvee Skate Shop across the street. Juvee sells skateboarding gear during the day, has a five-foot mini half-pipe to skate, and hosts rock and art shows at night. This was the perfect place to interview the band. I walked in the band members looked right at home in their element. They were among close friends and a couple skateboard guys. Mike, the lead singer, was warming up for his show by skateboarding the half-pipe; the rest of the band were drinking, smoking, and watching skateboard videos. I found The Stitches very down to earth—true to the image they have created for themselves.

The Stitches  
Mike—vocals  
Johnny Witmer—guitar/vocals  
Pete "Action Man"—bass

Skips—drums

Fuzzy—manager

SKRATCH: Where is the band based? How long has The Stitches been around?

JOHNNY: We are based out of Los Angeles—although now Mike, Pete, and Skips live in Orange County. I live in Hollywood. We've been playing out and recording stuff for almost 10 years.

SKRATCH: How was your recent European tour?

JOHNNY: Great! We were promoting our new album, *12 IMAGINARY INCHES*.

SKRATCH: Any strange happenings, bizarre incidents?

JOHNNY: One night in Europe Pete and me snorted something we thought was cocaine.

PETE: I bought some coke from this guy who we didn't know, and when snorted it I knew it wasn't coke. Johnny wanted a line, too, so I gave him one with no hesitation—because I didn't want to do alone! We got on stage, and Johnny was freaking out.

SKRATCH: Tell me about a highlight—or lowlight—from your tour?

PETE: I only shit four times the entire tour!

MIKE: I was putting suppositories up his ass left and right. At one point he had a whole bunch of ass-Drano and three suppositories in his hole—and he still couldn't shit. We ended up taking him to the hospital, and they gave him some liquid to make him shit. It worked, and he dropped the biggest shit pile...enough to fill a car hubcap full!

JOHNNY: Even after I shit though his bass playing was still constipated [Laughs].

SKRATCH: What European country was the best to play?

SKIPS: Amsterdam

MIKE: Arizona

PETE: Springs, Colorado

JOHNNY: Spain

SKRATCH: Out of all the European countries, which one had the hottest chicks?

JOHNNY: Spain

SKRATCH: Which country had the most hairy women?

JOHNNY: Spain

PETE: Portland, Oregon

SKRATCH: Is your new album, *12 IMAGINARY INCHES* (on TKO records), your first full-length album?

MIKE: Yes—because we can only come up with two songs every four years!

SKRATCH: How is the new album doing? What kind of reviews and response has it gotten?

JOHNNY: The LP is doing great. We've had 20 reviews with 17 percent of them being good. Three percent can't make up their minds, and the other two percent think that we should be disposed of.

SKRATCH: Who mixed and engineered the album?

JOHNNY: Mike and I mixed the LP. Earle Mankey engineered the whole thing and did the mix for the song "Automatic." Earle is great. He gave us lots of good ideas, and he had cool new-wave noise makers!

SKRATCH: What do you think about being referred to as SoCal punk revival pioneers? Do you think it's accurate or fair to say? Would you consider yourself retro-punk?

JOHNNY: We invented everything, and we are not ashamed to admit it. We are like the early L.A. punk scene before it got all hard-core. Don't get me wrong, I have never owned a Circle Jerks record. We are here to bring extravagance back into rock 'n' roll.

SKRATCH: Now that bands like The Hives, The Strokes, and The Vines have brought back a new rock revival in full bloom, major labels are suddenly expanding their definition of what constitutes good, marketable rock 'n' roll. Because of this, do you think The Stitches will make it on the radio or MTV someday?

JOHNNY: We hope, but we don't think that they're that smart. So basically, we are not holding our breath.

SKRATCH: During The Stitches career, only the position of drummer has had a changing of the guard. How long was Ed with you? What record-

ings was he on, and when did he leave the band?

JOHNNY: Ed was in the band since 1998. He played on the *FIVE MORE SONGS EP*, the *GSL* split, *2 IMAGINARY INCHES*, and *My Reactions*. He left after January 1, 2003.

SKRATCH: Who is your drummer now?

JOHNNY: *We* actually our original drummer, and he came back to the band a few weeks ago. We never wanted him to quit the band, but he left to pursue a degree in military arts. He ended up getting kicked out of school because they found the turkey baster and it's in his locker.

SKIBS: I'm glad to be back with The Stitches and they are lucky to have me back. I am the best shitty drummer around! That has been my quote for many years.

JOHNNY: Skibs makes the most original mistakes of any drummer.

SKRATCH: Who are some of your musical influences?

MIKE: Vom.

JOHNNY: Japan.

PETE: The Exploited.

SKIBS: The Crowd.

SKRATCH: On the recent 7" single, "Automatic", the B-side has a song, "I'm the Hillside Strangler". Why did you choose to cover this song?

JOHNNY: Um...we ran out of ideas?

MIKE: We thought it was a song that could show off my wide range of vocal abilities.

SKRATCH: What are your favorite songs to play live?

JOHNNY: Whatever ones that we come in on at the same time and end on the same time.

SKRATCH: Over the years you have been on several different independent labels—Kapow, Disaster, and GSL, just to name a few. Have you ever thought about starting your own record label?

JOHNNY: We already started our own label!

MIKE: Our label is called Vinyl Dog Records (VD for short).

SKRATCH: Who does all your videos and photos for your CDs?

JOHNNY: Spike Lee has been doing all our videos, and our persona photographer has been Ed Colver. All production exclusively done by Max Headroom. However, lately none of the above have been very available to us, so we have hired a new person for both video and photos. Her name is Tina Brugnoletti.

SKRATCH: What makes The Stitches stand out from other underground punk rock bands?

JOHNNY: I don't know... guess we like ideas.

SKRATCH: Tell me about a punk memory of The Stitches that stands out:

FUZZY: There was a time back in the early 90s in Huntington Beach (at Night Moves), which stands out. The Stitches were playing at Night Moves, and the police came in and shut them down because they were too punk for what was going on at the time. The band was ordered to quit playing and leave. Mike was the first one to come out of the club telling the police to fuck off. The policemen grabbed Mike and handcuffed him around a palm tree. Then Johnny came out and says he's in The Stitches, and he too, was handcuffed around a palm tree. In the end, four trees with four Stitches handcuffed around them. I'll never forget that night.

SKRATCH: What kind of person likes The Stitches? Who are your fans, and who goes to your shows?

JOHNNY: Freaks, faggots, drunks, junkies (two guys in wheelchairs), and anyone that's afraid to do it themselves.

For more information on The Stitches visit [www.TheStitches.com](http://www.TheStitches.com) or [www.Suburbias.com](http://www.Suburbias.com).



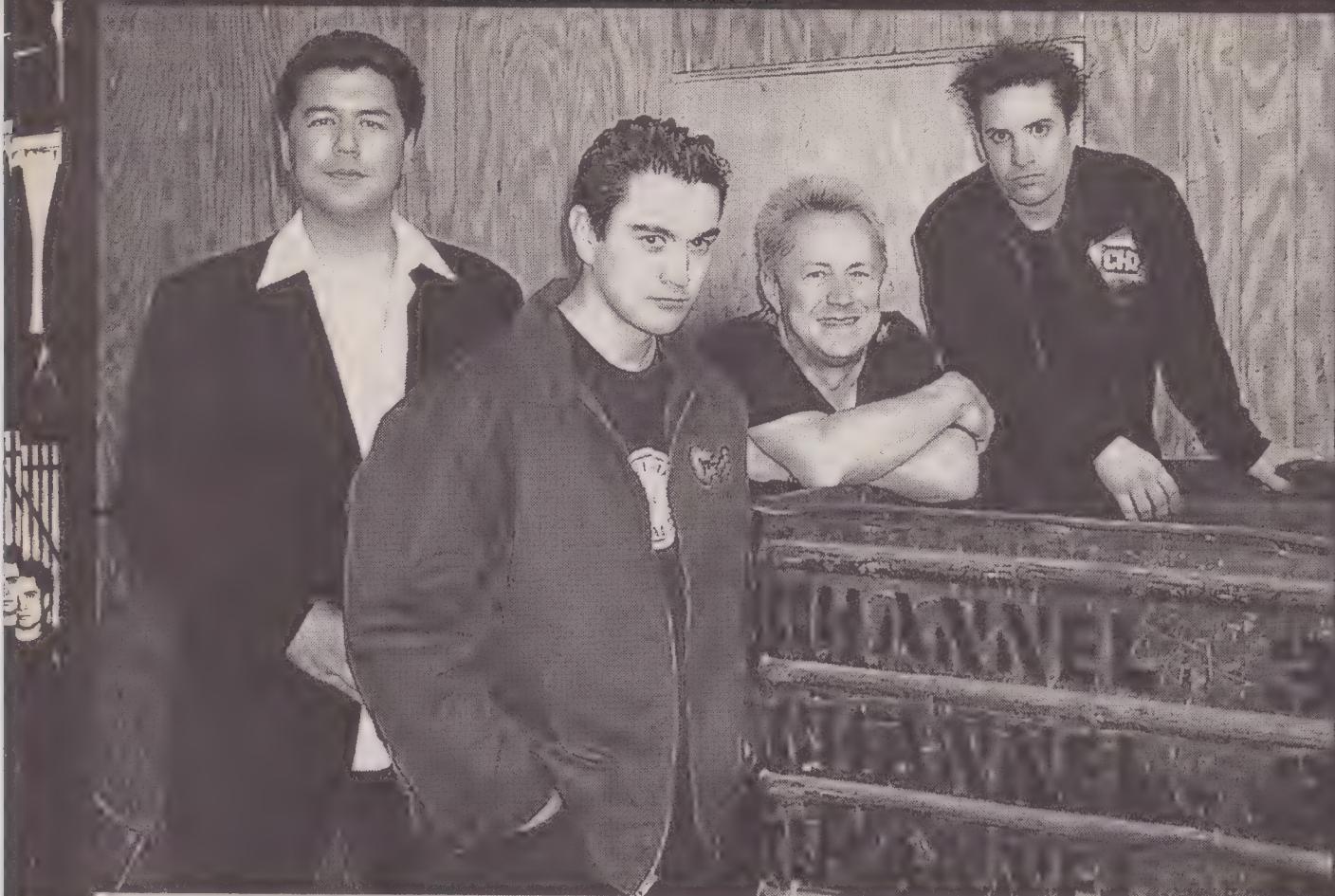
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## CHANNEL 3

Interview by Marcia Taylor

CH3 is one of O.C.'s earliest punk bands, formed in Cerritos in 1980 and signed by the infamous Robbie Fields for his Posh Boy label in 1981. The band released seven records before retiring from recording in 1994. However, unlike many of their peers, the band members continued to practice together and play the occasional benefit show in subsequent years, before reemerging about two years ago to play regularly and record a new, self-titled disc on the Dr. Strange label. The current line-up consists of original members Mike Magrann on vocals/guitar and Kimm Gardener on guitar/vocals, long-timer Alf Silva on drums, and new guy Anthony Thompson on bass. I had the opportunity to interview Magrann and Gardener for SKRATCH's "old school" issue about 15 months ago and really enjoyed their self-deprecating sense of humor and wry outlook on returning to the current punk scene. So I was glad to get to sit down with them as well as Silva and Thompson to discuss the new release and the band's plans for promoting it.

SKRATCH: So how long did it take you to make the new record?

MIKE: We'd been collecting the songs since 1994, because we'd always been writing all along. It had never seemed like the right time to record until recently. And when Bill at Dr. Strange launched the label, we were ready. We pulled it together in about two months.

SKRATCH: Why did you choose Dr. Strange?

KIMM: We looked at a lot of different labels. For many of them, you have to commit to

touring full-time. We can't really do that anymore because we have our own businesses or jobs. Everybody said good things about Bill—that he's a hard worker and honest. And he's an old time fan of CH3, so he was happy that we considered him.

MIKE: The label also has great distribution. And it's up to US how much we want to tour to promote the new record.

KIMM: Yeah. The record will get worldwide distribution, which is important to us because a lot of our older recordings you just can't find anymore. With Bill's label, people who want to buy our stuff will be able to get it.

MIKE: And you only have a certain window of time to promote the CD as a new release, so it's also great that it's easy to get now.

SKRATCH: Tell me about songs on the disc—your favorite song, the hardest one to write, whatever.

KIMM: "Just on You" is a favorite.

MIKE: Musically, it's a straight rip-off of The Clash. People always said we sounded like them, so in this song we just used every cliché of The Clash's music.

KIMM: I prefer to call it an homage to The Clash.

SKRATCH: Any other songs you want to talk about?

MIKE: You know, there are 14 songs on it. We intended to make a 10-song CD, but every time we went to throw out a song, the one that a particular person hated, someone else liked. We brought in friends to listen and help decide, but no one could agree; so we just kept them all.

KIMM: You heard the hidden track?

SKRATCH: Yes, I did. It's a purely

'80s-style ballad—quite different from the rest of the songs on the disc. How did you end up including it?

KIMM: At one point when we were sitting in the studio, Alf couldn't get his drum sound. I asked the engineer to put on a click track (just a metronome), and I just played the song. Jay Landsford (our old bass player) and I wrote it in '86 or '87. It didn't really fit in with the rest of the songs, so we put it there.

SKRATCH: What is Jay doing these days?

MIKE: He's still in Germany, still playing with Gigantor. They're big in Japan, of course! In fact, through him we've made contact with some Japanese bookers for a possible tour.

SKRATCH: I hope that works out for you. Every band I've ever talked to that has played Japan loves it. They say that the fans are so polite, appreciative, and loyal. GBH told me recently that it was the band's favorite place to play. How about you guys, Anthony and Alf: how do you feel about the new disc?

ANTHONY: I thought it came out good. The production is really good.

ALF: I love it! [Points at Anthony] I don't like his parts, though.

MIKE: Alf's our hardcore punker. He doesn't like the pop songs.

ALF: I just don't like them all the time!

KIMM: It's really hard to like any of them. We've been hearing them for six months now.

MIKE: Yeah. We were done recording in March, and the disc didn't come out until

November, so we have been listening to it and playing the songs for a long time. And when we go out to play shows, the kids want to hear all the hits, of course, so we have to work in the new songs—usually in the middle. It's a tough balancing act.

SKRATCH: What do you think of the fact that so many original O.C. and L.A. punk bands are getting back together and doing shows? Do you think they will be successful?

MIKE: Well, there's an opportunity right now for everyone to try it. And everyone is calling each other to talk about it. Some are in it for the long run; others are just testing the water.

SKRATCH: Anthony, how did you end up playing with these guys?

ANTHONY: I answered an ad in THE RECYCLER.

MIKE: We were being sneaky. We didn't say who we were, just said our influences were The Clash, The Ramones, and CH3. We got lots of responses, so it took us a while to weed through the weirdos. We had guys calling from all over.

SKRATCH: Anthony, when did you find out that you were actually dealing with the real CH3?

ANTHONY: I e-mailed Mike, and he told me to check out the Website—which is when I figured it out.

SKRATCH: Were you a fan?

ANTHONY: I listened to CH3 a lot.

MIKE: Yeah, when he was in diapers.

ANTHONY: When I was getting out of recess!

SKRATCH: Anthony, had you been in

other bands before CH3?

MIKE: He was in an emo band and trying to get out when we met him.

SKRATCH: Is that true?

ANTHONY: I don't want to talk about it!

SKRATCH: How about you, Alf?

ALF: I've been in the band since '93.

SKRATCH: I guess it's the lot of drummers, hiding behind all that equipment, not to be recognized off-stage. I'm sorry! How did you guys do the songs this time?

MIKE: I still write all the lyrics, and this last time around most of the music. I came in with the basic chords, and then we collaborated on the arrangements. It was a work-in-progress approach, because this time around the songs were not all together before we got into the studio. Most of the other times we've recorded, we had them ready when we went in. This time we just wanted to get in and out as soon as possible and do the real work.

SKRATCH: Which, I assume, means playing shows to promote the record.

KIMM: Yes!

SKRATCH: Is touring different than it was back in the old days?

MIKE: It's much different nowadays. We have computers, so we can just go to Mapquest to find places. We can make hotel reservations instead of sleeping on someone's floor. And we can find out where to eat.

KIMM: We watch the Food Network, so we have to check out the hot spots in the cities we visit.

MIKE: Yeah. If you go to the Website you'll see that we talk about the food in each city. Another thing that is really different now is the merchandise. We actually have people that do only that. In the old days, our roadies did it. The merch has to be set up right away. Then we have to introduce ourselves to the bands we're playing with, because they're all young kids.

SKRATCH: What was the band's best eating experience on the recent East Coast tour?

MIKE: Philadelphia—Gino's at 3 a.m. We ate cheese steaks

at every meal!

KIMM: You know what the secret is to cheese steaks? It's the Velveeta; they don't use REAL cheese.

SKRATCH: Are you seeing a lot of your old fans when you're touring back East?

KIMM: Yes. We had some really wild guy [there]. He was on the stage for part of the set.

MIKE: Afterwards, he kept asking us if we were in the band. When we said "yes," he asked us to sign this LP he had with him. I keep looking on eBay to see if it's turned up there yet.

ALF: Yeah, it's real funny. Mike won't tell me when people ask for autographs. He just signs my name!

SKRATCH: Does CH3 stuff turn up on eBay often?

MIKE: There was a signed photo of Kimm recently. An ex-girlfriend's mother put it on eBay.

KIMM: Yeah. She went out of her way to contact me to sign the picture—and then she turned around and immediately put it on eBay. I was pissed.

SKRATCH: Well, she probably was thinking, "I knew someday something good would come out of my daughter dating that guy in the band." How was New York City?

MIKE: We always feel at home in New York City.

SKRATCH: Where did you play?

MIKE: CBGB's, of course! Our old friends in Kraut got together to play the show with us. New York is so great; it's so easy to get around in, with all the cabs and the subway.

KIMM: And it's so NICE now.

MIKE: We used to stay at First & Houston at Jack Rabid's place. It was rough back then in Alphabet City.

SKRATCH: No kidding! I lived in NYC from 1980 to 1990, and you definitely didn't want to go to that area then; it was all shooting galleries and muggers. From what I've heard, the city has changed drastically since I lived there.

MIKE: Yeah, Giuliani went in there and cleaned it all up.

SKRATCH: Did you get a chance to hit ground zero?

MIKE: Yeah.

SKRATCH: I used to commute through the Trade Center every day for four years, so I really understood how huge those buildings were. I cannot even picture what it must look like now...or that they even really fell down.

MIKE: The first song on the CD, "Better Days", is about all the reaction to that. It's about how punk rock always had a certain cynicism; it could see evil in the world—you know, never trust the government, look around and keep an eye on what's going on around you. It's the punk outlook. In the '80s there were two paths you could choose: punk or Reagan. If you chose the latter, you had to turn your back to all the evils the government perpetrated. People are now just catching up to the fact that bad things can and do happen here.

SKRATCH: You and Kimm have been friends since grade school, and you've always been in the band together. When I see you out at other bands' shows, you're usually together. You're like fricking Siamese twins! Do you think CH3 could survive if you two weren't still sticking together?

MIKE: People always look for a combination in a band. We do get along here and as friends. If I'm out alone, nobody notices me. If we're together, it's, "Oh, there's CH3." And they throw beer at us.

KIMM: If we're lucky, they buy us a beer. But it is true: we do hang out together, as well as playing in the band.

SKRATCH: What's coming up for you guys as far as promoting the new record?

KIMM: We have spring and summer shows lined up. We may be playing SXSW in March. And then we'll do our kamikaze-touring thing, where we just go out and do it and come home. June through July we will be in Europe. We hope to do a Long Beach show sometime soon (it being our stomping ground). Duane Peters has talked to us about touring with U.S. Bombs. And we're definitely playing Holidays in the Sun in England.

CH3 certainly has a lot on its plate. Everyone I've played the band's new CD for really likes it, so I predict that CH3 is going to have a great time promoting it. My thanks to the guys for taking time to talk.

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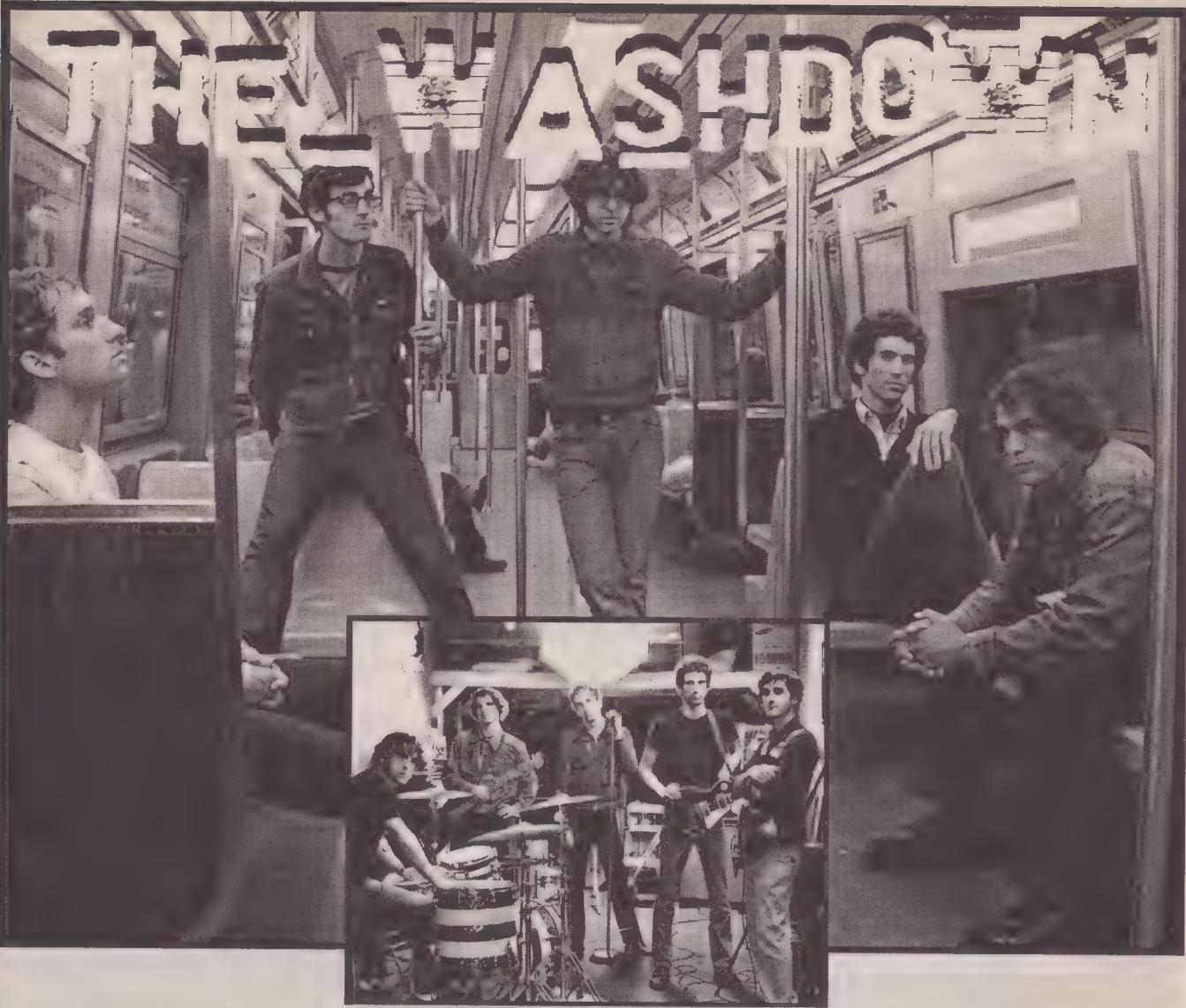
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## The Washdown

Interview by Franny Olsen

I really liked The Washdown the first time I popped its debut CD into my stereo—possibly because it was different from a lot of bands I had heard before, and possibly because I don't listen to a lot of rock. This is what The Washdown is: rock. Rock reminiscent of The Rolling Stones. Good rock. This surprised me, because most bands aren't really doing good rock nowadays, instead jumping on the "new rock" bandwagon. The best part about this little Florida gem is that its members don't care who they are or what they sound like; and that they're still thrilled to just be recording and playing.

I was sold even further when I called up Ryan (who sings) for this interview. He offered me a spot on the guest list the next time The Washdown came to the area. I mean, really! A band on Lookout Records—which is a fairly well-

known label—offering me some free showage? What's not to like?! Anyway, look for The Washdown as it gets bigger. I can't think of a band more worth looking out for.

**SKRATCH:** Is this working? Can you hear me?

**RYAN:** Yeah, actually.

**SKRATCH:** Alright. Question one: I notice you sound a lot like The Rolling Stones?

**RYAN:** [Laughs] Is that so?

**SKRATCH:** Yeah. Have you heard that before?

**RYAN:** Yeah, but more so as far as the recording quality of the record. Nothing really sticks out to me but the recording quality—which was more of a question of finance than anything. But yeah, I've heard that before, that we sound like them. That's okay. We all really like The Rolling Stones...but you could say that about everybody.

**SKRATCH:** They were a good

band. What kind of inspiration have you drawn your sound from?

**RYAN:** Are you speaking musically?

**SKRATCH:** Musically, bands, genres—whatever.

**RYAN:** We all sort of came up with the work ethic and idea behind the band from the hardcore/indie-rock scene down here. We all kind of met through bands that played together. We try to keep things on a level a little higher than we're used to. We try to keep things...keep it real, [Laughs] if you like that. [...] As far as musical inspiration, it's different for all of us. I'm in as far as from Otis Redding to, like, Talk Talk. Then there's Brian, who's into things like Unit 44 and Chavez. So, you know, it runs the gamut. Of course, we love The Stones and The Beatles—but who doesn't?

**SKRATCH:** How did you get discovered? Florida isn't really a musical Mecca.

**RYAN:** We got together as a band to sort of goof off and get drunk and play rock 'n' roll, you know; but this friend from New York, Megan, came down from New York last year, and she happened to see us play. I didn't know her very well before then, but after our set she came over to us and was, like, freaking out. She asked if we had anything recorded, and we were, like, "No." She told us we needed to record. She hooked us up with Molly from Lookout Records, and we recorded, and Molly really liked it. We were really stoked, because we're all fans of a lot of Lookout bands that have been signed in the last few years.

**SKRATCH:** Was Lookout the first label you were signed to?

**RYAN:** Yeah. That's our only release so far.

**SKRATCH:** That's pretty impressive.

**RYAN:** Yeah, I guess. We're really stoked because we love all these really good Lookout bands—Bratmobile, the Pattern, Pretty Girls, and whatnot—and us being a

part of that made us immediately agree to do this. We're really excited about it.

**SKRATCH:** Are people starting to recognize you and your music?

**RYAN:** We're definitely still a support band. I mean, every time we've played there's been people who have complimented us. We've been really lucky to be on tour with such great bands that people mostly come to see those bands. I wouldn't say that we have some humungous, crazy following...although there is some pretty crazy stuff on our message board, which I wouldn't have predicted [...] People get to know us through the big bands we've played with—Bratmobile, Hot Hot Heat, The Gravy Train, bands like that. They've all been really cool.

**SKRATCH:** You guys sound like a lot of that "new rock" shit coming out lately. How about that?

**RYAN:** We really had no idea we sounded like that. When we started a band in April 2000, we didn't have much of an idea about what was

going on on any level; but when we found out what we were playing was trendy, we actually considered not doing the band—not because we're so punk rock or anything, but because we didn't want [to] get caught up in [this big movement] and be forgotten. We ended up deciding that this is what we wanted to do, so why not do it?

**SKRATCH:** Who writes your lyrics? Where do you go for inspiration?

**RYAN:** Lyrically, it's myself and Michael; and usually it's just a stream of consciousness. Some songs have a definite idea, but others are a smattering of different ideas. Sometimes I'm just spouting off different ideas within one song, and usually we don't collaborate; but a lot of times we realize the lyrics go together after we write them. I guess we kind of think the same way. But it's mostly a spontaneous deal. I think Mike's lyrics are more profound than mine. He says some very interesting things. But we're not trying to say anything big right now.

**"We all sort of came up with the work ethic and idea behind the band from the hardcore/indie-rock scene down here"**

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# Big Wig

Bigwig  
Interviewed by Dane Jackson

When you're reading this you'll be able to tell this was done via e-mail. When SKRATCH told me Bigwig was a very hard band to get in touch with, they weren't kidding. I had to settle for an e-mail interview with guitarist and vocalist Tom Petta. If you like Bigwig, then you may enjoy this. If not, you probably won't unless you like to read an interview where my questions frustrate the person being interviewed.

**SKRATCH:** Do people from New Jersey have "I wish I was from New York" inferiority complexes?

**TOM:** No we have Bruce! I think most people from Jersey are proud of where they live. It's much different than New York. I grew up 13 miles from NYC. I think I lived closer to NYC than most NY-state residents. It's all just borders on a map. If you ask me, I love where I grew up. Total Sopranos land.

**SKRATCH:** Is Bruce better than Bon Jovi or could The Misfits kick both of their asses?

**TOM:** The Misfits takes the cake.

**SKRATCH:** Is there really a Tromaville, New Jersey?

**TOM:** I'm not sure. I think I'm missing something.

**SKRATCH:** It's where the Toxic Avenger is from. (Sorry, I just bought all three Toxic Avenger movies the other day, so I've been

on a Troma film kick.) Okay, enough about New Jersey. Tell me about yourself. What's your favorite color?

**TOM:** I've always been trying to find team green guitars. So I guess different greens. Ha ha.

**SKRATCH:** Do you like green beans?

**TOM:** Are you fucking kidding?

**SKRATCH:** Where do you see the punk music scene in five years?

**TOM:** I try not to keep up with any scene, so I'm not even sure where we are at now. I hope people will always like fast music—or else we are fucked.

**SKRATCH:** Do you have any other special talents as back-up in case fast music goes down the shitter?

**TOM:** I can flip a damn good pie.

**SKRATCH:** With the popularity of emo, will punk go the way of swing and ska?

**TOM:** Fuck emo! We made it through the ska and swing bullshit, and I can see the light at the end of this tunnel too. Some old ska bands we know actually kicked out horn players and started emo rock bands. What the fuck?

**SKRATCH:** This one's for all the aspiring musicians: Is punk music a very profitable business to get in to?

**TOM:** That is hard to say. Maybe if you run a label. For bands it may be luck. There are a lot of bands that make a good living off of this music. More power to them.

**SKRATCH:** So you're not one of those bands? Do you have a day job?

**TOM:** Most of us have day jobs when we are not on tour.

**SKRATCH:** I've seen Bigwig on a whole bunch of record label Websites, such as Kung Fu and Fearless. What label are you officially on?

**TOM:** Well, Kung Fu was kind enough to release our second record for us, and Fearless released our first and third. Both labels did a great job and were very supportive. Who knows what's next?

**SKRATCH:** Do you have any new-release plans soon?

**TOM:** We are always writing. I can't really say when we are studio bound. I think some demons from below will be released on the new record.

**SKRATCH:** So a heavy metal album?

**TOM:** So another redundant question.

**SKRATCH:** What can people expect from any new music?

**TOM:** We still try to mix it up. We don't try to write in any one style. We all have so many influences. I think we will always play fast-pissed-off music. I'm happy with all of the new stuff.

**SKRATCH:** How did the Warped Tour treat you this year?

**TOM:** Warped is a blast as always. They take care of bands. I think it's a good way to get your music out to new audiences. We only did

"I hope people will always like fast music or else we are fucked."

a short run, but I got to see bands that I always miss while I'm touring. Reach the Sky, Death by Stereo, Fivespeed, and The Planet Smashers were my favorites to watch this year.

**SKRATCH:** Is it me, or does the Warped Tour go a little bit downhill each year?

**TOM:** No, it's you.

**SKRATCH:** Who is the best up-and-coming band in the scene today, and why should we care about them?

**TOM:** Well, I've just heard some new, unreleased records. Stereotyperider from AZ is amazing. Closer Than Kin outta Massachusetts. Its new record is heavy as hell. Spitvalves from FL, and the band Jersey from Ontario. Jettsion from NJ is releasing some new stuff. It's good shit. Those are just a few I've been listening to.

**SKRATCH:** What band needs to pack it up and call it a day?

**TOM:** Shit-talking in mags is pretty low, so I would only tell those bands that they suck to their faces. Sorry.

**SKRATCH:** If you were an 80s sitcom star, who would you be and why?

**TOM:** CHARLES IN CHARGE guy. I don't know how to spell his last name. Scott Baio? C'mon, you know why.

**SKRATCH:** Now, would you be Scott Baio from back in the day or washed-up/year 2002 Scott Baio?

**TOM:** Dude, please.

**SKRATCH:** Is there life after death?

**TOM:** Not for the meat-eaters! Ha.

**SKRATCH:** Is there life after these cheesy questions?

**TOM:** Um... (everything fades to black) Elvis?

With no new album plans in the near future, Bigwig fans have only an upcoming tour to look forward to. Right now, Bigwig is playing with The Mighty Mighty Bosstones. If you ever plan on interviewing Bigwig, stay away from questions about green beans, CHARLES IN CHARGE, and heavy metal.

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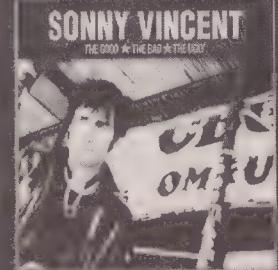
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# rainer: maria

Interview by Michelle Gonzales

**SKRATCH:** I found a lot of information on the band from the Website. The band got its name from

German

poet

Rainer

Maria

Rilke.

How

much of

an influ-

ence is

literature

on your

music?

**KYLE:** The

time that

we named

our band

was when

we were in college and I was taking a class in German literature. To name our band after a German poet was obvious at the time [...] It seemed very appropriate for the band, the name [...] having both a male and female [element].

**SKRATCH:** One of the main things that gets noticed about a band is the lead vocalist. Have you ever encountered any issues or criticisms about being a "female-fronted" band?

**KYLE:** [...] I don't think it ever worked against us. [Caithlin's] ability to sing is [self-evident]. On one hand, yes, being a "female-fronted band" is relevant, but on the other hand, it's like, "Who cares?" It is great to get recognition as

Love is the universal language that seems to have originated on the East Coast. The carriers of this language are Midwest-rooted, New York-based indie-rock band Rainer Maria. So much melancholy resounds through these love enthusiasts (whose band name is derived from that of German poet). Comprised of William Kuehn on percussion, vocalist/bassist Caithlin De Marrais, and guitarist Kyle Fischer, Rainer Maria thrusts powerful chords and deep lyrics. Currently out is a three-song EP entitled EARS RING, the latest in a long line of releases since the band's formation in 1995. Polyvinyl will be releasing the band's fourth album, LONG KNIVES DRAWN, this January. 10 days after completing the end of the band's most recent tour, Fischer gave SKRATCH via telephone a glimpse into the personality of Rainer Maria.

by it? How do fans react to it?

**KYLE:** I think



being a woman-fronted band. It shows people's interest of women in rock. [Caithlin] gets a lot of questions on that. She's always resisted and always made it an individual thing.

**SKRATCH:** Tell me a little about the songwriting. It deals a lot with the topics of relationships, like break-ups and long-distance love. Are some people turned off

everyone can relate to the vagueness of love and certain particulars to certain songs. People say, "I've always hated that song" or "I never understood that song"—and then "I really get that song." Most people who listen to [them] can somehow relate to where they're at. It becomes an emotional rescue [for them], and people relate to particular moments. The songs connect with listeners and provide a type of mirror.

**SKRATCH:** How would you compare the most recent releases to the band's first release—and even to your solo material?

**KYLE:** The new stuff came at the end of the last touring cycle; I think it was the end of 2001. I



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was feeling exhausted. It felt like I was tired from the electric guitar [...] I began to tour behind solo acoustic guitar. That was great. When I came back, I was ready and able to appreciate the expressiveness of the instrument. Meeting back with everyone after a two- to three-month hiatus was tremendously exciting. Everything ran full throttle and felt like it was bursting at the seams.

SKRATCH: I also read ■ statement that



called the band part of "new-school" punk. Instead of new generations heading directly over to the MTV punk/indie bands, do they skip that altogether and go straight to non-mainstream indie?

KYLE: We've been a band for seven years. When we started, I was 20 and it was an upstart band. Our first tours were with Superchunk. At the time they were the accomplished, "well-known" band. I remember the first time I saw them was when they were touring with Firehouse. [Firehouse] was the huge band, and Superchunk was the upstart band. The kids that were hooked onto our band were 16—and now they're 25. As for the new "new school," they have new opportunities to find music. "New school" is always relative to where you're standing at the time. Then again, there is always someone younger, I guess.

SKRATCH: Okay, I absolutely have to ask this (sorry for it): my best friend is an absolute fan, and she asked me to ask you where you shop (since fashion seems to intertwine a lot with your music).

KYLE: Everyone in the band would give a different view on it: [...] In New York, you [are expected] to wear something valuable yet acceptable. In New York, The East Coast sensibility is where you look like you got out of bed, look like you're trying but like you're not. Everyone has an eclectic taste, and you [begin to develop] and know what

things you like, modifying what you have. I tend to buy small, nice pieces; and I have my mom send me denim from Texas. I end up cutting them, selling them, and making things for my friends. People say about a pair of jeans I had my mom sew some things on, "Oh, they're so boutique. Are they special-edition Diesel jeans?" I tell them, "Yeah, they're special-edition My Mom."

Rainer Maria's Website:  
[www.rainermaria.com](http://www.rainermaria.com)



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# The Lyndsay Diaries

THE LYNDAY DIARIES  
Interview by Brian Spiegel

Scott Windsor of The Lynday Diaries is one man band from St. Louis whose acoustic guitar and heartfelt vocals tug at our heartstrings. Sound familiar? That's right, Johnny Cash did it, so did Bob Dylan. Since the guitar was invented there's been a history of performers whose heartfelt confessions hit you like a dashboard during a high-speed collision.

Okay, so it's hard to ignore the surface similarities between The Lynday Diaries and Dashboard Confessional. Man, guitar, broken hearts, microphone...line, it's all there. But comparing Dashboard with Lynday is like comparing The Clash with The Sex Pistols: sure, they are both listed as "punk," but each has a unique sound.

I got a chance to talk to Scott while he was driving through this great nation of ours en route to beautiful Southern California. The following hilarious interview was conducted while he was at a rest stop. Enjoy. (And honestly, neither of us has anything against Dashboard Confessional. Heck, I know all DC's lyrics.)

SKRATCH: Where are you right now?

SCOTT: I am in Oklahoma driving.

SKRATCH: Beautiful Oklahoma. What are you doing there?

SCOTT: Well, I left St. Louis this morning and I'm basically moving out to California.

SKRATCH: You're just tired of the Rams?

SCOTT: [Laughs] Yeah, that's probably what did it. And Nelly's writing bad songs now. I just have nothing left in St. Louis.

SKRATCH: So no more covering Nelly songs?

SCOTT: I guess not. [Laughs]

SKRATCH: How did your tour with The Beautiful Mistake go?

SCOTT: It went really well. We were both surprised that every night there was a really good turnout. So yeah, we really enjoyed it.

SKRATCH: Do you find that people around the country are starting to know your songs?

SCOTT: Definitely. At every show I see more and more people mouthing and singing the lyrics.

SKRATCH: Obvious question: Do you get tired of people who interview you asking you about your "Dashboard connection"? Do you get tired of people comparing you to Chris?

SCOTT: Well, my first record that came out I guess you could compare it a bit more to Dashboard. I really just took it with a grain of salt. I didn't really mind. I think it even helps a little sometimes. But then I released my second record, and I feel that it kind of moved away from the Dashboard/acoustic/emo thing. I sort of feel like sometimes it's Dashboard does this, Lynday Diaries does this. It's kind of like they put us next to each other and compare and contrast us. It's just kind of annoying how people want people to review my record and not compare and contrast every little detail to Dashboard.

SKRATCH: Yeah, I've been listening to your record a lot lately, and I can see how the first album was a little more acoustic and could be compared to Dashboard, but I don't think the new one sounds anything like it.

SCOTT: Well, I agree. [But] I can still see why people would make the comparison. Which is fine. It's just starting to wear on me. It's been like two years. [Laughs]

SKRATCH: How would you describe the sound of your new record?

SCOTT: I guess when I was writing the record I was consciously trying to make it NOT sound like a Dashboard record or something like that. I don't know. I'm just kinda getting more into my niche as a songwriter. The new album has more of a singer/songwriter feel to it.

SKRATCH: What do you think of the push that your record is getting, with ads for it in really big magazines like ALTERNATIVE PRESS and SKRATCH?

SCOTT: Well, Militia Group [the label] I'm in is really behind this record, really promoting it. I'm really excited how much they've promoted it. I'm really surprised me that they had that much faith in it.

SKRATCH: How would you describe a typical live show with The Lynday Diaries?

SCOTT: Well, it's not too exciting. I guess [Laughs]—just as exciting as an acoustic guitar can be. I don't know. This tour was a little more relaxed, laid back. On the last tour, I had a drummer and a bassist and someone who played a lot of other instruments, so I was a lot more fun. I used to be really tense and stressed out, so on this last tour I just tried to relax and enjoy it more, just have more of a good time.

SKRATCH: I read your bio, and I thought it was funny...well, not funny, but just strange, how this whole music thing came up as something that really wasn't planned. How did it all come about?

SCOTT: Basically, I just wrote one song that was on my first CD, and someone at The Militia Group heard it, I guess somehow. And we just started talking, and when the label was starting, they basically asked me to sign. I was excited, but I was also scared because I had only written that one song. I ended up just writing the 10 songs that are on the first CD. I really never even planned on doing shows.

SKRATCH: Really? You were just going to be a recording artist?

SCOTT: I think it happened so fast that I didn't know what to think. I never even crossed my mind that I would ever even have to play a show. Basically, the first time I played live, my friend just put me on this show and didn't even tell me about it, so I had to play. That was my first show with a band called Golden Hand. It was really cool. Then after that, I just kind of got more used to playing shows. I'm still kind of getting used to what I want to do with it.

SKRATCH: So when you were growing up, you didn't write songs? You only played guitar?

SCOTT: Actually, I played drums my whole life. I just kind of picked up a guitar somewhere along the line and kind of learned by myself. I never really wrote songs. For some reason, I was always writing down words, but I was never writing music. I just started doing that the past few years.

SKRATCH: When you write, do you have a process? Or is it like "Oh my god, I have to write a song! Does it come naturally?"

SCOTT: I definitely try not to write songs when I feel like I have to. When that happens, it ends up sounding forced with corny lyrics and stuff. Usually, I just write songs when it comes to me, either write the music first or the lyrics first—it can go either way.

SKRATCH: I like one of the lyrics, I think it sort of encapsulates the entire "emo-culture." probably have the lyrics wrong. I don't want to write a song about a girl. But I feel like I have to:

SCOTT: Bah.

SKRATCH: Is that how you feel when you're writing, where it just sort of comes down to you writing about a girl?

SCOTT: I remember writing that lyric, actually. That was one of the first lyrics I wrote for this record, and I was thinking how everybody always calls me emo and how they think I write these words because they are cliché right now. So I was sitting there thinking, "I don't want this song to be about a girl, but it's just sort of how I'm feeling." That's how it's going to come out. That's basically how a lot of the songs are.

**SKRATCH:** Do you try to veer away from writing about girls and stuff—but it sort of just ends up going this way?

**SCOTT:** Basically just write what I am feeling and what's going on in my life. I have so many friends who have the record and tell me I should write happy songs and then I sit down and go, "Well, that sounds good. I DO need some happy songs." Then I start writing—and it usually doesn't come out that way.

**SKRATCH:** It's impossible to write happy songs sometimes. Do you really hate the word "emo" and that whole culture that kind of was spawned by that type of music?

**SCOTT:** Well, yeah... I mean, totally understand it. It's fine when somebody says, "Oh, your music sounds emo," I see why. You go to call music something else. But it's all the trends that are coming in behind it now. It's kind of stupid. I think the thing that upsets me the most is that people call me emo just because they think I write stuff because it's the trend right now. To be writing the same words or songs if it wasn't emo... I just hate when people think that my words aren't real. That's really the only thing I have against it.

**SKRATCH:** Do you see yourself branching out musically in the future—like with electric guitars and stuff?

**SCOTT:** Yeah, I've actually been writing some new songs all on electric guitar. Not like heavy distortion or anything. I've been kind of writing more 50s-style stuff like that just seems to sound better on electric.

**SKRATCH:** So you're not going to turn nu-metal or anything?

**SCOTT:** Ah, probably not. I've done that before. I was a drummer for a metal band in high school.

**SKRATCH:** Really? What was it like going from a drummer in a metal band to playing acoustic guitar on stage?

**SCOTT:** It's definitely different. I've always had the two sides to me. I was the guy in the band who writes the softer music on the side. It's definitely weird just standing there when I play now instead of really getting into it.

**SKRATCH:** Do you have a headlining tour coming up anytime soon?

**SCOTT:** Well, no. I'm us doing one of those short tours for the winter, then around April I'm going start doing rotating tours. Honestly, I like going on tours where I am opening. Get kind of scared when I'm headlining that no one will come.

**SKRATCH:** When you open for bands, even if you're the first one on the bill, do you feel like you get a good response or do you feel like you have to win people over?

**SCOTT:** It's kind of nice, actually. I'm just starting to play shows where people who come actually have the CD and I don't have to win them over. That can be kind of overwhelming, doing that every night.

**SKRATCH:** Anything else you want to add?

**SCOTT:** No, really, just thank you so much to everyone who bought the CD. It really means a lot to me.

The Lindsay Diaries album *THE TOPS OF TREES ARE ON FIRE* is out now on The Militia Group. The band hits Chain Reaction in Anaheim on March 20th and the Troubadour in L.A. on March 21st. Check him out—but don't call him emo.

It all just happened so fast that I didn't know what to think. It never even crossed my mind that I would ever even have to play a show.

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# Slow Jets

**Slow Jets**  
Interview by Kathleen Rivas  
photo courtesy of morphius.com

An ascendant product from Baltimore, Slow Jets consists of mastermind Greg Preston (vocals, guitar), multi-talented Tim Baier (bass, guitar, keyboards, vocals), and intuitive Marc Berrong (drums, vocals). From a small living room and with the help of three microphones and two cables, Slow Jets produced its most recent record, *GOOD MORNING, STARS*, in merely eight months. *GOOD MORNING, STARS* is a strong follow-up to the band's debut album, *WORM INTO PHOENIX*. Slow Jets is often said to be reminiscent of influential "indie" bands such as Pavement and Guided by Voices, but the members of Slow Jets prefer to place themselves in the category of simply "good music." Who likes to be labeled, anyway? In this e-mail interview, the three "Jets" offer some insight on the glamorous life of Slow Jets and their gigs throughout lovely Baltimore. Read this thoroughly, or you'll "never, ever, ever get the story."

**SKRATCH:** In what year did the band originate?

TIM: 1997? '98?

GREG: 1998, I think.

**SKRATCH:** How long have you known each other?

GREG: [I've known] Tim since '96, Marc since '98.

MARC: I have known Tim and Greg through the other bands. They were in my last band, Landspeedrecord [...] I have only been in the band for about two-and-a-half [years]. It's a small town, so you tend to know almost everyone to some degree.

TIM: I've known Greg for about seven years, Marc for about three or four.

**SKRATCH:** Where did you get the name "Slow Jets"?

MARC: Yikes! I do not know. Greg will have to answer this one. I would like to know, actually.

TIM: I think there was an early song

called, "Slow Jets Will Crash into Magnets"—possibly, magnets being planets (they're magnetic?!). I dunno. That's my guess. Greg?

GREG: I wrote a song called "Slow Jets Crash into Magnets" a long time ago, so Slow Jets was thrown into the hat of band-name suggestions. At the time, it was Rick Ivy, Roman Kuebler, and I. I think that was the least-offensive name that we could agree upon. My other suggestion was Complex Sweaters, but no one liked it.

**SKRATCH:** Would you place Slow Jets into a specific genre of music?

TIM: Good.

GREG: No.

MARC: I think one night, over one too many beers, Greg and I were asked to describe our sound, and Greg came up with "post-pop." Between the reviews of the two albums, we have heard anything from XTC, Wire, and Soft Boys; to Archers of Loaf, GBV, and Pavement. So I guess that falls into the "indie rock" category—but it is what I always thought of as garage pop rock. (As you probably know, that question always seems to throw people off.)

**SKRATCH:** What was the inspiration for the lyrical content of *GOOD MORNING, STARS*?

GREG: I made an attempt to make each song contain a short story while still remaining mysterious. Most involve a fictional character stuck in a dangerous or confusing situation.

**SKRATCH:** The lyrics on both *WORM INTO PHOENIX* and *GOOD MORNING, STARS* are profound, yet their meanings seem obscure. Is it your intention to allow listeners to interpret their own meanings for the lyrics, or do you think the meanings are straightforward?

GREG: The intention is to intrigue the listener enough so that they'll sit down with the lyrics and try to unravel them. They are intentionally ambiguous, so I do expect the listener to interpret their own meaning.

**SKRATCH:** Does the lyrical inspiration for the albums come from experiences you have had as a band or from individual experiences throughout the years?

GREG: I suppose it comes more from individual experience—real and imagined.

**SKRATCH:** Considering *GOOD MORNING, STARS* was recorded in only eight months, was it easier to structure the songs for *GOOD MORNING, STARS* than it was those in *WORM INTO PHOENIX*?

TIM: There was a sizable delay between the recording and release of *WORM INTO PHOENIX*, so it was actually more like two years between the two records, during which there was some line-up shifting. Plus, the Jets started out as more of a side project for several of the early players involved, and projects viewed in that light generally take longer.

**SKRATCH:** *WORM INTO PHOENIX* has more songs than *GOOD MORNING, STARS* but a shorter length. For *WORM INTO PHOENIX*, was the recording process more spontaneous? For example, did you record a song right after you learned it, or did you give yourselves time to add in more parts to a song?

TIM: I wasn't aware of that fact. The basics of most of the songs on *STARS* were pretty heavily worked out beforehand. After the backing tracks were recorded, many of the overdubs (specifically, keyboards, extra guitars, some bass, percussion, etc.) were written and recorded randomly over the course of a few months.

GREG: The Jets were around for about two years before *WORM* was recorded, so we had a lot of songs to choose from and plenty of time to decide which were farts and which were bombs. There was a conscious decision to keep the songs short and succinct. For *STARS*, we tried to flesh out the songs a little more—but not too much. When it came time to record, we had about 14 songs and a self-imposed deadline (just because we thought we'd been idle a bit too long).

MARC: *GOOD MORNING, STARS* was actually recorded twice. We had attempted to record most of the songs we had



written (like "Margaret Square", "Trial of Sir Rocka", and "Heartbreak for the Socialites") in Greg's old living room. After listening to the tapes we scratched the whole thing, we re-recorded those tunes, along with the remainder of the album, in Tim's basement about seven months later to see what they would eventually sound like. Once we were in the studio and we liked the sound so much, we kept those takes and just built on top of them. So I would say there were two major writing "events," followed by one basic recording session to get the drums and some guitar tracks, and then about six months and two seasonal changes of sitting in Tim's dining room adding overdubs and vocals.

**SKRATCH:** For future albums, do you plan on maintaining the lo-fi sound of *WORM INTO PHOENIX* and *GOOD MORNING, STARS?* Personally, I think a more real sound—such as the one Slow Jets has—is superior to that of an over-constructed one.

GREG: We don't plan on spending a small fortune in a recording studio. Instead, we're putting our money into recording equipment. Nothing too fancy, mind you, so it'll still have that homespun quality we like so much.

TIM: I can't really say that one "sound" or production style is preferable to another. However, we as a band would generally shy away from BAD overproduction, if possible. Unfortunately, we are fairly limited in what we can do because we possess neither the knowledge nor the gear necessary to do a serious production job (e.g., the latest Flaming Lips records) on any of our songs. Since we're fairly determined (not to mention constrained by \$\$\$) to record ourselves, we're kind of stuck with what we have. That said, I'm very happy with the sound of *STARS* and am excited to employ my increased knowledge (and gear) level on the next record.

MARC: I think, with the experience we gained (especially Tim) with the last album, that we will be sticking to doing it ourselves. I know that Tim and Greg both have gained a lot more knowledge about getting what they want. We have a new rehearsal space that's as comfortable as the one we recorded *STARS* in, so I am pretty sure we will continue with the same formula. We should be starting the third album within the next few weeks, but this time we get a half-inch tape instead of one-fourth, so it should prove to be even better.

**SKRATCH:** How did you promote *GOOD MORNING, STARS?*

TIM: Oddly enough, by sitting on our asses. Really! GREG: Everyone who heard it started their own band. Seriously, we didn't promote it much...but hopefully the label did.

MARC: Morphius Records really holds the stick in this department. David, Janet, Stephen, and Justin have all been doing a pretty fine job of getting the Slow Jets word out there. We tend to keep to our families and our homes, writing and recording and doing some out-of-town shows only rarely.

**SKRATCH:** Are there any upcoming shows outside of Baltimore?

GREG: We're still waiting for some good offers. MARC: We do have some "slated" for NY, NJ, PA, and the Southeastern U.S. in the spring and summer.

TIM: There's an "outside of Baltimore"?

**SKRATCH:** Are you planning to headline an out-of-state tour anytime soon?

MARC: No time real soon.

GREG: Maybe this summer we'll do a two-week tour of backyard parties!

TIM: I'm going on an out-of-town vacation soon. The band is not coming, however.

**SKRATCH:** What's the story behind the "Slow Jets get banned in D.C." thing?

GREG: Just a joke.

MARC: This was a joke. It has been commonplace for Baltimore bands to have a sort of love/hate relationship with D.C. Being in such close proximity to their city, you would think that Baltimore bands and D.C. bands would consistently trade off shows, but this is very rarely happens. D.C. and Baltimore, as far as rock bands are concerned, have a very Hatfield and McCoy relationship, so I believe that was mentioned as a joke when we actually got booked at this [event] showcasing "D.C." bands and visual artists.

**SKRATCH:** Why is Rick Ivy no longer listed as part of Slow Jets?

TIM: He's listed! He's the "fourth Jet."

GREG: Well, he doesn't practice or play shows with us anymore. I just hit him up for a song or some help with lyrics now and then.

MARC: Well, Rick, for all intents and purposes, still is very much a Jet. He wrote "Margaret Square" and sang on it, as well as did vocals on a couple of other tunes. He is now the father of a beautiful baby and is still living in Baltimore, working with his new project, Switchman. He also does Paper Jets, which is an incubator, if you will, for Slow Jets tunes—as Slow Jets is an incubator for Paper Jets tunes.

**SKRATCH:** Why is Roman Kuebler no longer the drummer for Slow Jets?

GREG: Because Marc wrestled the stool from him!

TIM: Roman's goals were not the same as the Slow Jets' goals.

MARC: From what I remember, Roman had broken from Roads to Space Travel, of which both Tim and Greg were once members. Roman began a project called The Oranges Band. It was at this time that I was growing weary of my last band, and he was too busy to really commit to Slow Jets. I was hanging out with Greg at the time and asked him and Tim if they wanted me to do a couple of shows with them. And that is what started this whole thing. Oh, keep an eye out for The Oranges latest record—now on Lookout Records!

**SKRATCH:** Why was Marc Berrong credited as "magician" in *WORM INTO PHOENIX*?

GREG: Because he appeared in a puff of white smoke wearing a top hat.

MARC: I was credited as the Magician because I came to Greg and Tim and said I would take over the drummer's seat so they could put out the album and promote it. Although I had absolutely nothing to do with the writing of the album, I like to think of myself as one of their bigger fans. They were kind enough to list me in some capacity. I was almost listed as Notary Public. I still love it when people come up to me and say, "You did such a great job on

*WORM INTO PHOENIX.*" I just smile and say "thanks."

**SKRATCH:** How would you describe your fan base?

MARC: That's hard to say, considering we don't have much of a fan base per se. But I would say, from the people we see at shows, that it would span the ages, sexes, and mental capacities—from young indie rockers to aging hipster alcoholics to blue collar pop addicts.

TIM: So small it cannot be charted.

GREG: Militant home-brewers.

MARC: "Militant home-brewers"? Brilliant, Preston, brilliant.

**SKRATCH:** What are your long-term goals?

MARC: Stay alive, enjoy working with Tim and Greg, and keep writing music we really like. Pretty simple.

TIM: Mine has always been to get a free meal because I play music. That goal was realized in 1998...but I suppose another free meal would be pretty cool.

GREG: Record the longest bass-guitar solo.

**SKRATCH:** What essential record must you listen to everyday?

TIM: Anything by Bob Marley.

GREG: Every day? I'd get sick of anything if I heard it every day...except for MAYBE Bowie, GBV, and The Pixies.

MARC: Hmmm. I tend to be somewhat scattered when it comes to albums. Lately, I do have a core of bands I listen to every week. Here are some of the albums I most like: GBV: *BEE THOUSAND*; Pavement: *SLANTED AND ENCHANTED*; Wilco: *YANKEE HOTEL FOXTROT*; and anything by The Clean or David Kilgour. (Greg has gotten me so hooked on The Clean. You should check them out.)

**SKRATCH:** Who were your formative musical influences?

GREG: Formative? Beatles, Bowie, Doors, Pink Floyd.

TIM: Sex Pistols, REM, Bob Marley.

MARC: As a child, I would say Led Zeppelin, The Police, Van Halen, Men at Work, and a slew of crappy '80s popular music. But later I fell for bands like The Wedding Present, early New Order, Joy Division, and I emphasize EARLY REM. Your usual suspects, I suppose.

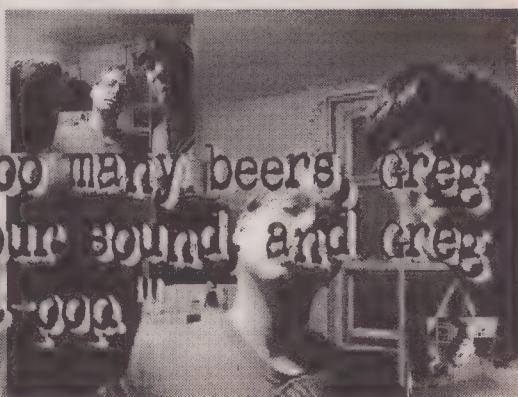
**SKRATCH:** What would you like to say to those who listen to your music?

GREG: Call us and we'll play your next party.

TIM: Listen to it backwards: there are hidden messages.

MARC: Well, if they bought the albums and like them, "Thank you, thanks for the time, appreciation, and money." If they didn't buy the albums but still like them, "Thanks for the time and appreciation." If they hate us, "Thanks for the honesty—and please pass the album onto someone with taste."

To contact the Slow Jets and have the band play at your next backyard party, e-mail the guys at [slowjets@hotmail.com](mailto:slowjets@hotmail.com).



"I think one night, over one too many beers, Greg and I were asked to describe our sound and Greg came up with 'post-punk'."

# SMALL BROWN BIKE



Small  
Brown  
Bike  
Interview  
by Chad

Small Brown Bike is a four-piece band originally from Marshall, Michigan. In 1999 it was signed to No Idea Records based on the strength of a self-released 7". Among the bands SBB has toured with are Hot Water Music, Leatherface, Saves the Day, and Piebald.

This interview was conducted via e-mail with Mike in December of 2002.

**SKRATCH:** You were suppose to play the Space in Kalamazoo, Michigan on the 25th but you didn't play. What happened? I read on your Website that Trevor broke a vertebra. Did that have anything to do with it?

**MIKE:** Trav took a spill in November off of a balcony. He fell 12 feet down onto his back and broke a vertebra. We canceled the show so he didn't have to worry about stressing it.

**SKRATCH:** How does one break a vertebra? That doesn't sound too nice, is he okay?

**MIKE:** It was a pretty scary thing, but he's doing okay now. He has to wear a brace for three months and take it easy. There was a chance that he was going to have some surgery, but everything is looking okay. It could have been way worse.

**SKRATCH:** What has Small Brown Bike been up to lately? Any records coming out? Any tours going on?

**MIKE:** Since Trav hurt himself we pretty much just decided to hold off on booking any tours or studio time for now. Up until his accident we were practicing six or seven hours a day getting songs ready for our next record. I am hoping that we can record in the spring and hit the road in the summer or something like that. We have about 12 new songs ready to record at this point.

**SKRATCH:** Your band has been described as "emo-core". Do you consider that to be accurate? What do you think emo means in the spectrum of rock music? What's its significance, and how do you embrace or not embrace that label?

**MIKE:** I always have trouble trying to describe our



music. It just feels weird to shove it into a genre. Emocore? Not really sure what that is. I

someone wants to call us bluegrass or jazz, that's fine. Too we have always played with all kinds of bands and never wanted to really say, "We are a post-hardcore band." We just do what feels natural and let it go from there. The term that I use to describe it really is the last thing on my mind.

**SKRATCH:** I have a copy of the 1997 MICHIGAN COMPILATION CD, and you were track 12, "When Added Equals Three". That's a good song. I think all the other bands on that album are really good, too. What do you think about the current state of rock n' roll in Michigan as opposed to how it was when that record came out?

**MIKE:** We have kind survived into the second wave of Michigan music, in a way. All of the bands who we played with when we started have broken up and (some of their) members have started new projects. I'm still into all of the music that they make too. Basically everyone has gotten older and is try-

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ing new stuff that they wouldn't have veate ago.

**SKRATCH** I'm from Grand Rapids, Michigan, and I just sit around and daydream about Detroit taking over the world, like all day long. Do you think I'm wasting my time? I like The White Stripes a lot and I'm hearing lots of good things about The Detroit Cobras. And I always heard Brodzilla was really good and Spit for Athena. What do you think?  
**MIKE** We all grew up two hours from Detroit in small towns but we still made a lot of trips there to see shows in high school. I'm proud to see some good rock coming out of Detroit these days, but I think that it has always been there—and that now the rest of the industry is catching on.

**SKRATCH** Detroit is known for Motown—and now Eminem, CP and Kid Rock. But Detroit also had MC5 (which just had a new movie made about it), Iggy and the Stooges, and Destroy All Monsters. Do you think there's a division between R&B and rap or rock and rock 'n' roll that just confuses the media, or do you think the media does a good job covering everyone? Do you get any extra coverage because of any connections you have to Detroit?  
**MIKE** I haven't really felt any difference now that Detroit/Michigan is seeing a resurgence in popularity. The media is such a weird monster. All it takes is one

company to get behind something, and it just seems like everyone else follows suit.

**SKRATCH** Do you think if everyone got together and asked Michael Moore really nicely that he'd make a documentary about Michigan bands, or do you think he's too busy?

**MIKE** He seems like a pretty busy guy. I think that's almost either see him stick to the politics/soap stuff. He does such a good job of making people think about politics and look at stuff in a different light, plus, it's entertaining as hell.

**SKRATCH** Aren't you from Marshall, Michigan? My band Cain played there once—at the old Henry Hall building—and we broke open a bunch of vacuum cleaners and terrorized everyone until they all ran screaming from the building and they shut us down and there was a big fire and we all inhaled way too much vacuum dust and almost died. Are we legends? We had to escape before they caught us. Have you ever heard anything?

**MIKE** I have been living in Lansing for the last six years, but I still try to keep in touch with what's going on in Marshall. I'm really proud of the scene that still exists there. We wouldn't be who we are today if it wasn't for growing up playing at the old Henry Building. I never heard of anything about your show. It sounds pretty wild, though.

**SKRATCH** What's the most exciting or strange occurrence that's happened to you as a band? Tell us a good story.

**MIKE** We've always managed to have a good time, whatever we might be doing—recording, writing, touring, crashing our van into a guard rail. One of the most memorable things that happened to us was the time that we played at a zoo. The show that we originally planned on playing was moved, so when we followed the new directions we ended up at the Tulsa Zoo. We were a bit confused, but everything actually worked out great. We set up in the picnic area and played our set.

**SKRATCH** What do you think you're getting for Christmas?

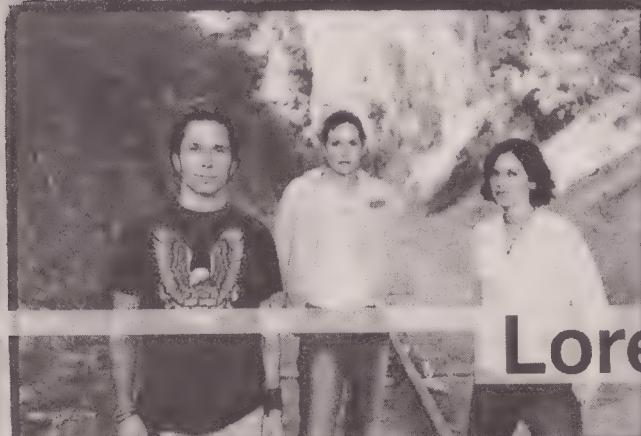
**MIKE** Too late! I got that cordless drill that I've been wanting.

If you want to find out more about Small Brown Bike, you can visit its Website at [www.smallbrownbike.com](http://www.smallbrownbike.com). You can wish Trevor better luck in not falling off anymore balconies, or just send him a "get well soon" card.



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# Stalag 13

**STALAG 13**  
Interview by Marcus Solomon

**Stalag 13 is:**  
Ron Baird—voice  
Dave Casillas—lead guitar  
Blake Cruz—guitar  
John Morris—bass  
Larry White—drums

18 years ago, Stalag 13 began a career that would one day make it one of the most historically notable of punk bands. That it emerged from the unlikely location of Oxnard, CA, is all the more intriguing. A deaf person can hear Stalag 13 loud and clear. I held my hand over one of the on-stage monitors and could feel the enormous sound become a tangible object. The vibrating pulse conformed to the shape of my palm and pushed it away with combative force. The rest of my body felt as if it were inside of a rocket engine. Pain and pleasure became one as this sonic assault invaded my mind via the eardrums. This is Hardcore: hardcore taken beyond any limit. It is not necessarily straight edge, but similar in its positive messages and commanding presentation.

The spirits of the now departed Mark Hickey and Henry Knowles of the legendary band Aggression have whispered their desires to the remaining cadre of Hardcore band members. Hearing this, Stalag 13 has reunited along with Dr. Know and III Repute in order to resurrect once sleeping spirit that fueled many surf and skate-punk sessions almost 20 years ago. The band's one and only release, IN CONTROL, has been a must-have for many dedicated collectors for just as long and is now being re-released by Dr. Strange Records. Be wise and get this prime and explosive sample of audible history. Know your history and learn more at [www.stalag13hardcore.com](http://www.stalag13hardcore.com).

**SKRATCH:** What happened on stage tonight? You obviously hurt yourself somehow. Was it an old skateboard injury?

**BLAKE:** Shit. I wish. No, I guess I thought I was like 14 again...when I started this band.

**SKRATCH:** It looked like you jumped up and popped your knee.

**BLAKE:** Well, I jumped up and went out

into the crowd. I am 34 now, and this was our first show [after many years]. We have some work to do.

**SKRATCH:** That was your first show in how many years?  
**BLAKE:** 18.

**SKRATCH:** 18 years—and it sounded like you had never been away.

**BLAKE:** I think we are "there," spiritually-wise. We can always look back and laugh.

**SKRATCH:** What brought the band back together?

**BLAKE:** John Morris hooked up with some cats, and the next thing I know they were hollerin' at everyone...and we just said, "What's up?" The Doc from Dr. Strange flew Ron out here, thank you very much, and there we go. This is the first leg of...let's see...like, 18 more days.

**SKRATCH:** The Doc is re-releasing your one and only album, NO CONTROL. I think I wore the grooves out of that one in the mid to late '80s.  
**BLAKE:** [Laughs] Yeah, that was the first and only one that Stalag 13 did. We did a couple of compilations. [...] We're still all around in Oxnard, you know.

**SKRATCH:** My friends and I would skate our ramps and play all the Hardcore stuff. It drove the neighbors crazy. Did you see the current THRASHER MAGAZINE deal where the first 100 new subscribers get a free copy of IN CONTROL?

**BLAKE:** Yeah, we seen that: some guy who was roadie for us showed it to us. [...] It was really cool to see. It was kinda weird how all that came about and how Dr. Strange approached us.

[Random person going by]: What magazine is this for?

**SKRATCH:** It's for SKRATCH MAGAZINE; and I think Dr. Strange Records will post it on [www.drstrange.com](http://www.drstrange.com) also.

**BLAKE:** Hey, SKRATCH MAGAZINE! Listen up! Shout outs, man! We're back! That was our first little show, and we got the cobwebs out and we're ready to go!

**JOHN:** That was our first show in 18 years!

**SKRATCH:** How many shows do you have lined up?

**JOHN:** I think we have about 16 shows all over the western United States and all the way up to Seattle, Washington.

**SKRATCH:** How are you able to afford this tour?  
**BLAKE:** From Gabe.

**JOHN:** I thought it was funded by Dr. Strange....

I really don't know. [Laughs]

**BLAKE:** Hey, Bill, we love yoooo!

**JOHN:** We are just selling a bunch of merchandise. Seriously now, Bill is a great guy.

**SKRATCH:** Lately I have had to edit out a lot of the compliments about Bill because it gets a bit redundant...but that's the way it is.

**JOHN:** Yeah, he is the nicest guy. I have been out to the store in Alta Loma a couple of times, and he is always way cool. We have had other options to get with other labels, but we really like what Bill does. He is really into the music, and he is really into old hardcore and it shows with the products he puts out.

**SKRATCH:** Do any of you skate anymore?

**JOHN:** Nah.

**BLAKE:** Shit. Did you see what happened to me tonight with my knee?

**SKRATCH:** I was standing right there. That's how I walk, too.

**BLAKE:** Can I just say one thing right here? DR. KNOW RULES!

**SKRATCH:** Well, we know that. Their show tonight was great, also. Hey, know what? A long time ago I wrote all the lyrics to one of your songs on a T-shirt, and I thought I was sooooo cool. But when I washed it, it all turned gray.

**JOHN:** It turned into an Agent Orange shirt then [in reference to the Agent Orange song "Everything Turns Grey"].

**SKRATCH:** You are preparing to drive straight out to Las Vegas now. Is this the "Oxnard Comes to Your House" tour [in reference to the HELL COMES TO YOUR HOUSE compilations of the mid '80s]?

**BLAKE:** We ain't goin' to hell. We still got it. Yeah, we are headlin' for Vegas.

**SKRATCH:** On the IN CONTROL cover art, there is the classic three-frame artwork of someone jumping way high with a guitar. Is that you?

**BLAKE:** Aw, no man, that ain't me.

**JOHN:** Actually, if anyone has the original vinyl, read the inscription near the center label. It says: "Who's on the cover? Answer: It's not Blake!"

**SKRATCH:** I read that on my copy, and it has always confused me.

**JOHN:** We just thought we would throw that out there.

**SKRATCH:** Who did that artwork for you? It's still popular to this day.

**JOHN:** Some guy named Jaime Hernandez did that for us. He does a lot of stuff, like LOVE AND

# "Hey, SKRATCH MAGAZINE! Listen up! Shout outs, man! We're back..."

ROCKETS. He's pretty much internationally famous.

SKRATCH: Is Hernandez the same guy who did the artwork for III Repute? The style is very similar.

JOHN: I really don't know.

BLAKE: I don't know, either, but I think he might have done that.

JOHN: He's done a lot of flyers and a lot of band's records.

SKRATCH: Is Stalag 13 going to cut a new album, or what?

BLAKE: I think so. I don't know. This was our first show, so let's see how it goes.

SKRATCH: Are you writing new material?

JOHN: We have some stuff we are bouncing off each other, but we are waiting to see how this little tour goes and such.

SKRATCH: But with the THRASHER MAGAZINE connection and Dr. Strange distribution, you are getting worldwide attention already. C'mon and put out some more!

BLAKE: Hey, man! We are back, and that's all I gotta say. Lemme give a shout out to Louie, because that's my dawg.

JOHN: Wait! This has to be said: It was actually the death of Mark Hickey and the death of Henry Knowles that really brought us all back

together again.

SKRATCH: Both young men dying in a relatively short period of time.

JOHN: Henry had a Website, and there was a Hardcore message board, and a lot of people were communicating but had no real idea of what was going on.

SKRATCH: That's the weird irony of death: It can bring old friends together again.



BLAKE: Yeah.

JOHN: We dedicate all of this to Mark Hickey and Henry Knowles of Aggression.

SKRATCH: I am fortunate enough to have experienced Aggression back in the day. They were performing with The Weirdos at some converted bowling alley. Circle One played

also.

JOHN: Oh, really? Wow. [Laughs]

BLAKE: Yeah, man! This is to the old-school motherfuckers like you who have been around the block! Stalag 13

is back from the motherfucking' Hardcore! So, peace out!

Be sure to catch Stalag 13 if you have the opportunity, and tell 'em SKRATCH sent you. Don't forget to visit [www.stalag13narcocore.com](http://www.stalag13narcocore.com)

"...That was our first little show, and we got the cobwebs out and we're ready to go!"

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# DARK DAY DAWNING

Dark Day Dawning  
Interview by Annette Ivanessian

If you like a lot of screaming mixed with heavy and hardcore music, listen to Dark Day Dawning's new album, *MORNING*. That's what I thought. Give it a listen; collector items straight at all the stores, but there's an even more macabre and mysterious face. Dark Day Dawning releases the deepest and darkest secrets that become a mystery to unfold. You must read the lyrics to understand what's going on. Matt, the lead singer, displays a tremendous amount of vocal strength on every track of the new album and his lyrics are top quality. The powerful words are like a book of Gothic poetry. To me, Dark Day Dawning somehow creates a new branch on the tree of heavy metal. Unique, yet not too much screaming. It's so handle. Besides that, these guys prominently answered my questions incredibly well! Afterwards, I gave the album a second chance and discovered its less obvious qualities. Musically, Dark Day Dawning is well-rounded. Although there may be bumps in the road ahead, the leaves will still cover the branch.

SCRATCH: What is the meaning of Dark Day Dawning?

MATT: It's an allusion to the stylistic elements of our music: heavy and dark, yet often very subtle, minimalist and soft. I don't think although we look seen rather dark at first, it creates an impression of contrast: the good contrast with the bad.

JUSTIN: Literally, the name suggests that there's a grim future on the horizon.

SCRATCH: Would you guys consider yourselves an anger band?

MATT: Absolutely. Both lyrically and tonally, we approach the just very angrily.

TONI: I don't think that we're really angry people. If there's any anger in me personally, I try to use the band as an outlet for that.

SCRATCH: Does Dark Day Dawning represent Philly?

MATT: Yes, we do. We don't shout out to our friends during our songs or anything like

that. In our style, however, we're all

from Philly. We live living here.

TOM: I'm definitely proud of where I'm from. The Philly scene has been really great bands out there are all kind of different. I see them, though, that's Philly band and gets the respect they deserve in Philadelphia itself.

JUSTIN: Philly is a city with little self-respect where band from Philly does this is the last place that will give them any respect. In this, we try to represent Philly. We try to recognize and support everyone.

SCRATCH: Under what genre would you classify Dark Day Dawning?

MATT: I don't really know. I think we fit into some elements of metal, hardcore, and some rock.

TONI: I would say we have been mainly played in hardcore, Boston Progressive metal/hardcore/expo/country/jazz.

SCRATCH: You guys sound different than most heavy metal bands. Do you feel like you guys have created a whole new genre?

MATT: People tell us that we have no genre, but I don't think so. I think we have our own particular sound, but a lot of bands have been mixing styles. Just think we play with the extremes a lot more than just bands feel comfortable doing.

JUSTIN: Tough question. I think that to outright say "we would be born underground" inaccurate. We are heavy but melodic, dark, emotional, depressive, somewhat complex.

SCRATCH: How often does Dark Day Dawning play shows?

TOM: As often as we can. Give band all have and go to school.

MATT: Once, something weird in 2008. It's every weekend.

SCRATCH: What types of crowds do you get at your shows?

MATT: Philly is much less segregated than a lot of other cities. Punks like us, fans like us, hardcore kids like us, whatever. I think mostly hardcore kids, though. It doesn't really matter to us who comes to our shows, as long as people can appreciate the effort we put into everything. It really means a lot to us.

SCRATCH: There must be some deadly moshing at your shows.

MATT: Yes, our ass moshfucker. Bring a mouth guard.

TONI: Yeah, a generally decent amount of moshing goes on, but since the record has come out, this seems to have stopped.

SCRATCH: Matt, do you write your own lyrics?

MATT: Every last word. I could feel sort of cheap and whorish if I didn't. I don't think I would be able to put the same amount of dedication into singing if someone else wrote them for me. An emotional aspect would be if these writing lyrics that a lot of people are going to hear is ironically a very personal thing.

SCRATCH: What inspires you to write?

MATT: Life. Life around me, and my feelings. I grew up as a guy in the early 90s struggling with an addiction. I like to write about things that are personal. You also find people can relate to it. Often times myself having a very clear vision of things, writing clears it out, giving a channel through which to voice that kind of self-expression.

SCRATCH: Your lyrics seem like they were once poems. Is this true?

MATT: Not as such. I write them for Dark Day Dawning exclusively. I don't preach or anything, so I guess that they are poems in some sense, because they are comprised solely of lyrical content/no message, no politics.

SCRATCH: Your lyrics are so beautifully written. Why do you choose to scream

"IT'S AN ALLUSION TO THE STYLISTIC ELEMENTS OF OUR MUSIC:  
HEAVY AND DARK, YET OFTEN VERY SUBTLE, MINIMALIST AND SOFT.  
IT'S AN ALLUSION TO THE STYLISTIC ELEMENTS OF OUR MUSIC:  
HEAVY AND DARK, YET OFTEN VERY SUBTLE, MINIMALIST AND SOFT."

then all out instead of harmonizing the spoken words.

MATT Well first off, thank you very much. I think that the style of music calls for screaming in most cases. If I feel like singing would be a bit out of place a lot of the time, screaming feels a lot better. Also, I'm an okay singer but by no means a fantastic one. I don't think I'd be quite the guy for a singing-only band. I haven't recently been asked to be the fourth tenor or anything.

SKRATCH In the song "The Final Refuge" you write, "Hide the tears that I stopped making." Are you expressing some type of hidden sorrow?

MATT Sorrow... is hidden. That song is about the idea of leaving, packing your shit, getting in the car, and leaving everything behind. It's about feeling trapped in a routine that you can't escape and feeling hopeless and violent because of it. I think that this is something that almost everyone can relate to on some level, especially the teens and young adults that are mostly listening to this type of music.

SKRATCH Tell me what is the message behind this quote: "Faded initials encased in a heart carved in the side of a fallen tree."

MATT Right there. I'm talking about change, about life going on and people being left behind, about friendships fading, and about being loved and then forgotten. I thought that it was a good way to end our song, because it really brings to mind an actual picture that summarizes the ideas in that song. I think the line is descriptive enough to create as desolate of feel as it can be.

SKRATCH Is there any word of a tour coming up?

MATT Absolutely! We're touring with Kansas City's Savoy Grace and Florida's This Was Through East Coast MI, Justin December 8th through January 18th.

SKRATCH Do any clothing companies sponsor you guys?

MATT Yeah, I wish. I had a few from other guys, and it was too cold to free-ball so I wore sweatpants. If any underwear companies read this, hook it up, I'm a 11.

SKRATCH What goals do you hope to achieve in your lifetime?

TONY My number-one goal personally for the band has actually already been achieved when I was 3 we got into music. I always wanted to touch just one person with my music. I want to be someone's favorite band. Recently I found out that someone said we are their favorite band and well, that just floored me.

MATT Be happy. Do everything you want before you have kids. Fuck waiting is reirement you never know if you're going to take

# DARK DAY DAWNING

in that long

SKRATCH What are Dark Day Dawning's most unique characteristics?

MATT I think we all have quirks that are either endearing or annoying. Tony's a neat freak but Justin never washes his clothes. They even out and I am possessed with figuring out how Marques rocks.

TONY Matt, Justin, and Vinnie are nerds.

SKRATCH What are the things that as a band you need to improve upon?

MATT I think we need to dedicate more time to writing as a band.

JUSTIN We need a steady agent. If we had one booking thing down, we'd play all over the place all the time.

SKRATCH What are your views about the war in Iraq so far?

MATT Fuck the Texas justice mentality. Fuck the adherence to religion as a deciding factor in voter-heavy decisions. Fuck this ridiculous republican 18th century ideas.

TONY I don't really keep up with the state of the world. It's terrible. I know but I'm too busy to even watch the news. Plus I'd rather watch THE SIMPSONS.

JUSTIN You know I think Colin Powell is on the money in saying that disarray in the Middle East is a terrible thing and should be avoided at all costs. I think the conflicts that we've had in the Middle East have been largely instigated by issues of poor foreign policy on the part of the U.S. I think that the people of our country are grossly undereducated with regard to world politics and the decisions made by the leaders that we have elected. Thus, we have a very weak system of democracy. This needs to change.

SKRATCH What underground bands would you like to be recognized by people across the country?

MATT In my opinion, 99% of the world's good music resides in some level of what is known as the underground. In my atmosphere is better than any group putting in millions of dollars. Commercialization of music tends to pollute the content as well as the packaging.

TONY Bands that have influenced me include, but are not limited to, Converge, Jane's Addiction, Escape Plan, Counting Crows, Ten Year目睹, Shai Hulud, Cursive, and The Good Life. Seriously, I can go on for a long time.

To check out more on Dark Day Dawning, visit its website at [www.darkdaydawning.com](http://www.darkdaydawning.com) for free music downloads, show dates, lyrics, and to purchase CD's.

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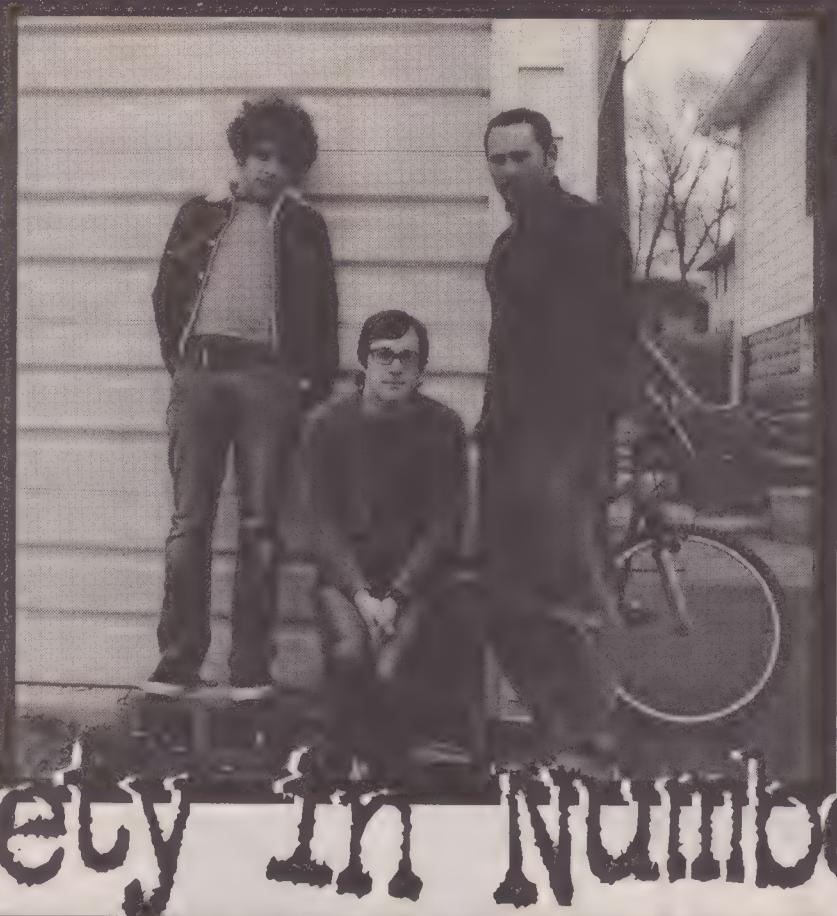
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Safety in Numbers  
Interview by Emily Kendy

When SKRATCH spoke with singer/guitarist Andy Jackson about Safety in Numbers's debut CD, BUILD AND STRUCTURE, the poor guy was a little confused at first, as he is currently touring with ONE of his other bands, Hot Rod Circuit, and didn't know which band he was supposed to be talking about. Needless to say, he did a good job of plugging each—and another side project called Reggie and the Full Effect.



SKRATCH: It must be hard to keep it all straight.

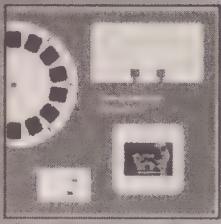
ANDY JACKSON: Yeah, well, Safety just sort of happened because I had all this extra material—songs that were six or seven years old that people kept telling me to put together. So I got my friend Jake, who drums, and my wife (Brona) together with our other friend, Kris.

SKRATCH: Do each of the bands you play in sound alike?

JACKSON: No, no. Reggie is sort of silly, poppy, goofy rock. Safety is a bit heavier; and Hot Rod Circuit...

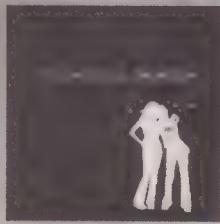
# Safety in Numbers

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Law of Inertia Magazine has a new format! That's right, Law of Inertia, the magazine that has given a new meaning to the word "bad-ass" is going full color. Featuring Pretty Girls Make Graves, Blood Brothers, Converge, Tiger Army, Har Mar Superstar, Boy Sets Fire, MC Paul Barman, Dillinger Escape Plan, and many more! On sale January 7th!

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65 Film Show Breathing Will Be Assisted CD, Law of Inertia Magazine #10 & 11

**SKRATCH:** Yes?

**JACKSON:** Is the best rock you've ever heard.

**SKRATCH:** So, what's the plan for Safety, since it's so new?  
**JACKSON:** Play more live shows---once I'm done with this tour with Hot Rod, probably.

**SKRATCH:** What are you listening to right now?  
**JACKSON:** Wilco, and the new Foo Fighters.

**SKRATCH:** Do you have a favorite band, a big influence for you growing up?  
**JACKSON:** Sonic Youth. They're my favorite band of all time.

**SKRATCH:** What's your drink of choice on the road right now?  
**JACKSON:** Tea—the stuff that coats your throat.

**SKRATCH:** Part of your pre-concert warm-up?  
**JACKSON:** Yeah. I'm not really into vocal warm-ups or anything like that. [Laughs] The tea is good, though.

**SKRATCH:** Have you been to Canada before?  
**JACKSON:** Toronto and Montreal. I just remember it was rainy and cold; the weather basically sucked.

**SKRATCH:** Ever been to Vancouver?  
**JACKSON:** Yeah: we played there about three years ago with Piebald.

**SKRATCH:** Any memorable moments during that trip?

**"I love the bong; but I'll smoke a fucking apple if it has good weed in it"**

**JACKSON:** We watched a hooker get beat up in front of the police station.

**SKRATCH:** Yep. It's the "call of the wild" up here.

**JACKSON:** We also got into your marijuana.

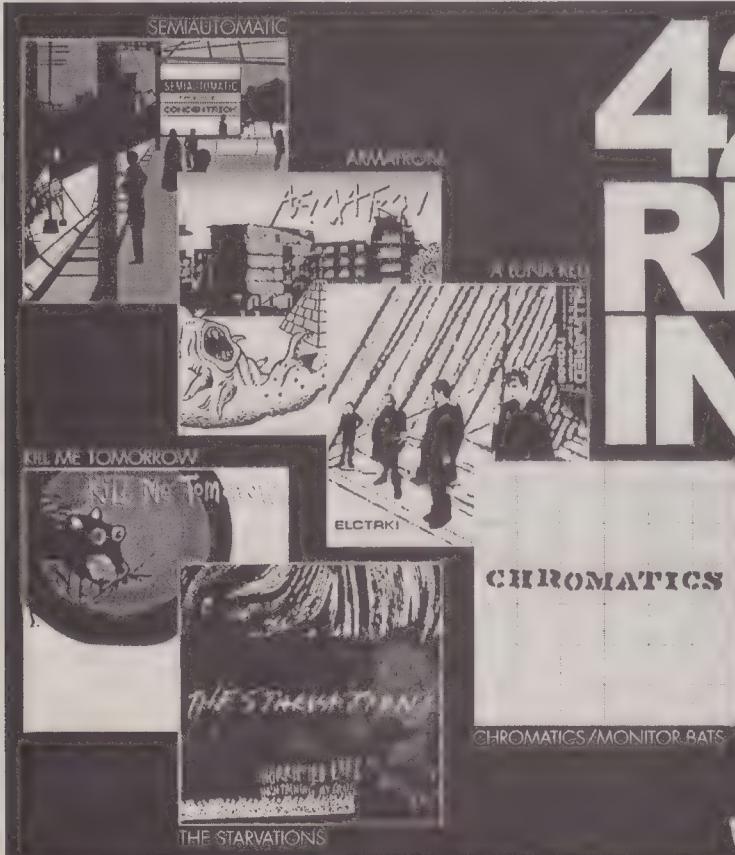
**SKRATCH:** Damn right! What do you prefer—seriously now: joint, pipe, or bong?

**JACKSON:** I love the bong; but I'll smoke a fucking apple if it has good weed in it.

**SKRATCH:** Latest epiphany?

**JACKSON:** If I weren't so stoned maybe something would hit me. Wait—maybe that is an epiphany.

**SKRATCH:** Either that, or you're just stoned.



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# BREAKING PANGAEA

BREAKING PANGAEA  
By Vanessa Chibis

Breaking Pangaea's hard-hitting Undecided Records release CAN-NON TO A WHISPER unloads just enough bouncy beats, dazzling guitars and strong melodic songwriting that it creates some seriously powerful images. With such a shimmering album demonstrating that this Philadelphia-based threesome can indeed play some mean tunes, it's not surprising that the band's upcoming Equal Vision EP (set to drop sometime before spring) is intensely anticipated. It's expected to feature everything these rockers do best—kicked up a notch. Expect more—and hear a lot more—from this band in 2004. It's no doubt that with its touring addiction, Breaking Pangaea will be invading your town rather sooner than later. We spoke to Will Nooit, the man responsible for the band's stellar drumming, and managed to figure him a little bit of what goes on in the band's collective head.

**SKRATCH:** First of all, remember when you were telling me about the idea of survival?

WILL: Yes.

**SKRATCH:** About how that's something that you look for in a person, whether they would be able to survive stuff is something that attracts you to a person? Is this idea something that relates to the people you have chosen to collaborate with in your band?

WILL: Hmmm... I never thought of it in that way—but yes, it really does.

**SKRATCH:** Why so? Explain.

WILL: Doing music for a living has got to be one of the most difficult tasks. The odds are ridiculously stacked against you, so if you don't surround yourself with people that are willing to really go to war for it and give more than 100 percent, then you've already lost.

**SKRATCH:** Do you consider yourself a strong enough person that would be able to survive everything and anything? [Laughs] Can you do it?

take a punch?

WILL: [Laughs] If you punch me, I'll probably fall over, but I'll definitely get back up. I'm no superhero; I'm not even very physically fit—but I'm tough. I can take a beating—whether it means driving 18 hours straight or playing two shows in one night and loading equipment all night, or eating nothing but chips from a gas station for days on end.

**SKRATCH:** And so just to go over it, that's the whole idea of what you're talking about, right? being tough enough to be able to withstand a lot of things and be able to keep going no matter what things happen—I guess both physically and mentally.

WILL: Yeah, that's really what I think it's about. Plus, if you don't really love it, there's little chance you're going to survive.

**SKRATCH:** Keeping with that idea, I think that there are a lot of bands out there that really love what they're doing and who will be strong and go through a lot of tough things just to play their music—but, unfortunately, all those bands don't survive in terms of longevity in the music industry. Therefore, what do you think it takes for a band to survive in the music industry?

WILL: Well, to survive one thing...but to succeed is another thing entirely. I know everyone's idea of success is different, but I'm going to assume you mean being fairly popular, selling records, selling tickets...

**SKRATCH:** Yeah—just being able to last, to be able to do it for a long, long time—like bands that have been doing it for years and years. What do you think it is? What do they have that allows them to keep doing it?

WILL: See what you're getting at? To do that, I think you have to write music that goes beyond what's cool and what's trendy. There are bands that are basically timeless. And there are bands that you really big all of a sudden because what they are doing is popular at that time. If you are popular because of the genre of music you are

playing, then you will die along with that fad.

**SKRATCH:** Well, how do you know? What if you're the one who starts that fad?

WILL: If you write good music that goes beyond that people from all walks of life should be able to appreciate. I mean, various points in their life. And there are always exceptions. Right now, though, I can't think of anyone who really started anything, and if it could someone would come along and prove me wrong.

**SKRATCH:** Nothing is original, origin is subjective. But there are musicians who take things and put them together in a certain way, that just creates something that generates interest in popularity. For example, do you think that the type of music you play is part of a fad?

WILL: Typically, people refer to us as a rock band or an emo band.

**SKRATCH:** Okay, well, before you continue, which do you think you are?

WILL: "Emo" gets thrown around like crazy these days, and that's [both] good and bad...good because people are willing to give certain bands a chance [so people might listen to us that otherwise wouldn't]. But I think that we are a rock band. I get more excited when I hear Guns N' Roses than anything else. And Fred is a van Halen junky.

**SKRATCH:** [Laughs] Guns N' Roses? Anyway, rock these days can mean a variety of things; things are categorized under sub-genres of that genre. Even those two examples aren't exactly the same kind of rock.

WILL: Oh, you can cut and slice it up anyway you'd like. That's why I consider us a rock band.

**SKRATCH:** Generally speaking, though, you're associated with a certain "scene," "label," "genre," whatever—merely because all the



bands you tour with...and maybe even because you've got a release on Equal Vision coming out? Okay?

WILL: Yes we are, and that's okay. I don't have a problem with it. It's all words—which is far from the music.

SKRATCH: Yeah, but getting to the point: do you think that this gives people the impression that you're a part of the 'fad'? Like, we're going to use the word punk just for argument's sake, okay?

WILL: It might give that impression—and there's nothing I can do about that. If they listen or if they come see us live they can make their own decision as to whether or not they want to be a part of it.

SKRATCH: Essentially what I was asking is: Do you think you're a band that has the ability to sustain itself within the music industry? Do you think that Breaking Pangaea is going to be playing music for a long, long time?

WILL: Yes. Absolutely.

SKRATCH: Because... (I always need the because)

WILL: Because Fred's an incredible songwriter and musician. He alone would sustain. And with me by his side? Come on! It's like [a no-brainer].

SKRATCH: [Laughs] Good enough. It's like a freaking super-group or something.

WILL: Exactly. They are going to come after us with some antitrust shit.

SKRATCH: [Laughs] Alright. Do you feel that the band has a certain philosophy?

WILL: We focus on the music, the sound, the energy of it. We have our personal philosophies—some shared, some not.

SKRATCH: Then how does the idea of "Breaking Pangaea"—the literal, dictionary meaning of it—relate to the band? Why is the name something that you choose to represent yourselves with? Because people will see that name and maybe draw conclusions from its meaning or whatever. By the way, straight from the dictionary, it means a hypothetical super-continent that included all the land masses of the Earth before the Triassic Period.

WILL: I think it's something we're striving for. We'd like to be that powerful (and I don't mean powerful in a mad scientist sort of way).

SKRATCH: Like you mean you're trying to make a mark? You're trying to impact something—a someone—in some way?

WILL: Yes, to make a difference. It might be a single person (and people have told us how much our band and our music means to them—which is incredible). So we're basically striving to make more of an impact each day, each show, each tour.

SKRATCH: Which is what motivates you to keep going? To think that you can make a difference?

WILL: Well, I think that we are in love with the sound, with the pure sound of music. But also the fact that it communicates with people on a level that goes past words and language. Making a difference in people's lives is definitely an amazing part of creating music.

SKRATCH: What music makes a difference in your life? [Laughs] We all already all know you dig Eve, right?

WILL: Yes we do. Well, really, I can't say I'm a huge Eve fan. But you're right: my recent obsession with radio-friendly hip-hop has led me to Eve and others.

SKRATCH: Well just leave it at that. Finally, what are some things that you think aren't right in your country?

WILL: Oh, I think there's plenty wrong with the country. The violence is pretty outrageous. My next-door neighbor was shot in the chest twice two months ago. But, I guess I can't really speak about the entire country—but [it's] just absurd. It's beyond me how that can happen, even once (and it's not rare).

SKRATCH: No, I know. I just had this conversation with another band—like, how high the crime rate is and how much violence there is.

WILL: Have you seen BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE?

SKRATCH: [Laughs] Yeah, we talked about that, too. Of course, I've seen it.

WILL: It's pretty crazy. If it wasn't so damn cold up there I'd probably move to Canada.

Breaking Pangaea's rocking out. Joining the band are Hey Mercedes and Armor for Sleep. 2/12 Lillian's (Louisville, KY)

2/13 The Groove Shop (Cleveland, OH)

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For more dates and information: [www.breakingpangaea.com](http://www.breakingpangaea.com)



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# SOAPBOX



## Soapbox Revolt Interview by Emily Kendy

"Oh, no," says Ryan, singer and guitarist of Soapbox Revolt, about whether SKRATCH woke him. "It's like two o'clock here. We've been up for a couple of hours." The boys are still standing in the shower line at the house of a friend of a friend's that beats, according to Ryan, the close quarters of the Soapbox Revolt van.

SKRATCH calls back, two hours later, when he's feeling "awesome" and the freshly-scrubbed band members—including Phillip (drums) and Brendon (bassist)—are biding their time in a parking lot. They are waiting for Mike (guitar), who is inside Fitzgerald's, a music venue they played the night before, in Houston, Texas. As Mike's



sad story unfolds, Ryan's cell phone makes the rounds, and band secrets, musings, and lessons learned from the recording of the band's second EP, SO IT BEGINS, are spilled forth via the airwaves, like some sort of dashboard confessional.

**SKRATCH:** Sounds like you guys live a real 9-to-5.

RYAN: Yeah, if it's 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.

**SKRATCH:** What are you doing right now?

RYAN: We had this show last night, and Mike left his wallet inside—so he's in there right now talking to the staff, and they're all searching around with flashlights. I don't know if he's going to be happy about me telling you this.

**SKRATCH:** I won't tell. So, Mike's miss-

ing wallet aside, how's the tour going?

RYAN: Awesome. We're having the best time. The guys from Staring Back [tour headliners] are so cool.

**SKRATCH:** Are they giving you little pearls of wisdom?

BRENDAN: The only thing those guys have given us are bottle rockets tossed into our van—when we're driving.

**SKRATCH:** Speaking of on-the-job hazards, I heard on TV this morning that new stats prove being a musician is bad for your health. Does this news flash worry you?

RYAN: We do all right. I mean, performance-wise, we go OUT every night; but we're all pretty good at taking care of ourselves. We're health fanatics; we exercise.

**SKRATCH:** You do?

RYAN: Yeah. It's funny, but I figured most bands exercise—which, evidently...

**SKRATCH:** ...Isn't the case? What, do you guys exercise...together?

RYAN: [Laughs] No, not together. For me, personally, playing our set and taking down our equipment is the warm-up. Then...I don't

know. I'm so pumped after a show that I'll do sit-ups and push-ups.

**SKRATCH:** Well, keep up the good work, Hans. What's the first song you ever learned to play on the guitar?

RYAN: Uh...it was so gay: "Come as You Are" by Nirvana.

**SKRATCH:** That's not so gay.

RYAN: Yeah, but I remember I was about 13, and I just learned that intro: dundundun dun dundun—you know—and played it every day all day, thinking I was a guitarist.

MIKE: When I first started playing the guitar, I took a Spanish Guitar class. I like jazz. I swear, these guys think I'm weird. You should see my mp3 collection.

**SKRATCH:** Mike, how's the wallet situ-

ation working out?

MIKE: Well, I've just called in to cancel all my cards, but I guess someone was trying to take money out of my bank account. They weren't able to, but....

**SKRATCH:** What happened last night? Was it a case of D.W.D. (dropped while drunk)?

MIKE: No. I left it on the stage while we were playing, and afterwards it was gone. We weren't able to find it.... I have no cash.

**SKRATCH:** Ahem. Well, good luck. Back to the Interview: Music Influences?

PHILIP: Carter Beauford [of Dave Mathews Band], John Jorgenson [of Slipknot], Travis Barker...The hardest thing about joining this band was going from hardcore metal beats to a punk beat, because metal was where I was coming from at the time.

**SKRATCH:** What's the difference between the two beats?

PHILIP: With metal there are a lot of half-time signatures, and sort of...melodic rhythms; whereas with punk you're playing on every note and keeping straight time the whole way through. Metal music I like right now? Atreyu.

BRENDAN: I have to say, I still listen to a lot of the old stuff: NOFX, Lagwagon. I do really like Staring Back. Their songs are quite fantastic pieces of work.

**SKRATCH:** If you were to play a benefit, what benefit would you choose to play?

RYAN: Hm. Well, all our home benefits are for the MANA food bank. [...] I've never really thought about it. [Laughs] That's selfish, isn't it? I guess I'd play a benefit for the Veterans of America. I have a lot of family members—uncles—who are veterans.

**SKRATCH:** What would you be doing right now if your arm was accidentally chopped off by accident?

MIKE: Probably sleeping.

**SKRATCH:** If you were to stand on a soapbox, what topic would you choose to talk about?

BRENDAN: I wouldn't say anything; I'd just stand there.

PHILIP: Annihilation—of the drums. And that you should always take risks.

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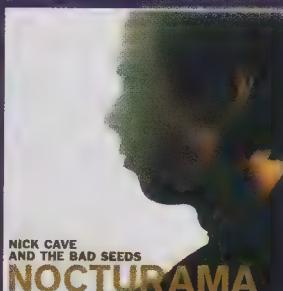
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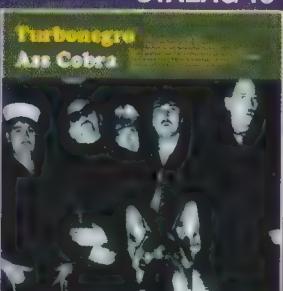
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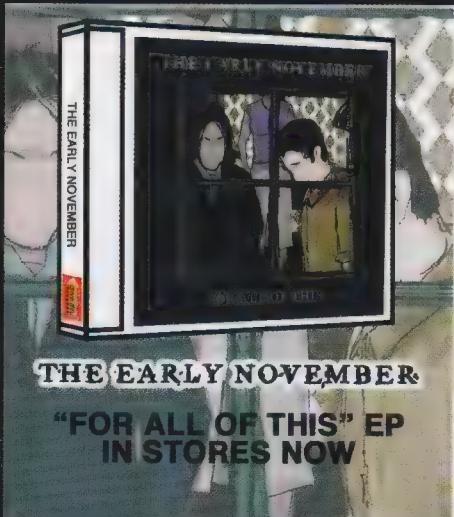
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# "I know, I know: it's bad for you and all



**SKRATCH:** How did the recording process go at Love Juice?

**PHILIP:** It went really well. The guy who was our sound engineer (Metal Dan he was called), he was a cool guy. He'd just make faces at us while we played. It was fun.

**BRENDAN:** You always learn a lot every time you record. You learn about your music style and how it's changed, [as well as] how to spot your flaws and become a tighter musician.

**SKRATCH:** Is there a theme to this EP?

**BRENDAN:** I don't know. Ryan's love life, probably.

**SKRATCH:** Where do you usually write lyrics?

**RYAN:** 10 minutes before I'm supposed to record them. And I'll tell you, most live shows after we've been recording new material, I'm making up

the words as I go.

**SKRATCH:** Current vices?

**PHILIP:** Soda—Diet Coke, to be specific. I know, I know: it's bad for you and all that...but I like the taste, and the fizz.

**SKRATCH:** I like how you call pop "soda." Canadians would never use a word so wishy-washy.

**PHILIP:** Are you Canadian? I'm half-Canadian!

**SKRATCH:** That's pretty funny. Time's nearly up. Does anyone have any final thoughts—or recent epiphanies that aren't too private to share?

**PHILIP:** Well, back at home [i.e., in the San Fernando Valley], there's this guy, Ray, who works at Guitar Center. He's full of all these philosophies, like, "Drummers don't actually play drums

because they're hitting them with sticks—so drummers really play the sticks"; and "There are no best or worst drummers, because each style is different, like a thumbprint."

**BRENDAN:** Uh, I have noticed that the way you say "about" is pretty funny.

**MIKE:** [To the wallet-stealer] I'm comin' for you.

Check for these guys in the Granada Hills area—specifically, at the American Legion Hall, where they like to play local shows. Look for a full-length CD from them in the future, or listen to their debut EP, SO THIS IS WHAT FAILURE SOUNDS LIKE.

## that...but I like the taste, and the fizz."



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# JASON LOEWENSTEIN



Jason Loewenstein  
Interview by Emily Kendy

"Guess who else is staying here?" says long-time Sebadoh bassist Jason Loewenstein over the phone from Philadelphia's Comfort Inn, though evidently the question is rhetorical. "One of the greatest rock bands in the world: Queens of the Stone Age!" After a spot of static, he adds: "And some other band something about Trial of the Dead. They're walking around the hotel talking on their cell phones, REALLY LOUD." The last part of his sentence fades, giving the impression he's snickering over his shoulder—which he most likely is, as he's sitting with his tour buddies in front of the TV.

Loewenstein's natural charm is disarming. He does not seem to be a raging control freak who took on ALL aspects of his debut solo album, AT SIXES AND SEVENS. He's more of a perky Elliot Smith—a normal,

friendly sometimes funny guy. One might as well be working with him in retail so unplugged is his ego.

SKRATCH: So, what's Lou Barlow up to these days? You guys talk much?

LOEWENSTEIN: Oh yeah, I talked to him the other day. He's busy with the new Folio compilation album. We were talking about hooking up around your neighborhood near Seattle for a few shows, but it ended up one of us would have had to wait around for a couple days.

SO YOU KNOW FINANCIALLY SPEAKING.

SKRATCH: It just didn't work out, hm? That's too bad. Did you ever get annoyed with talk about the two of you—as the odd couple, as each other's bitches, and what-not?

LOEWENSTEIN: And in a perfect world it would be nice for people to have taken our music for what it was. But it's human instinct to analyze stuff. I know I do when I listen to music. Lou's basically a really good friend and a big influence in my process as a songwriter.

SKRATCH: So how is touring (to promote your own CD) going?

LOEWENSTEIN: We're not really touring to promote my CD. Playing live—that's what I love to do, and I'm playing with these two guys, Kevin and Bob. It's going really well—even though the turnout [phone stat]

SKRATCH: What was that? The turnout sucks?

LOEWENSTEIN: Well, we've been playing really well, and we're getting hype about college radio charts but...I guess we'll see. Maybe when word gets around.

SKRATCH: Word. So it's probably a good thing you've got those guys touring with you, considering you played all your own instruments on the CD.

LOEWENSTEIN: Yeah, I couldn't really do that on stage. I'm not a one-man band.

SKRATCH: Well, maybe not LIVE. The album's pretty good, though. It's just...What possessed you to do EVERYTHING?

LOEWENSTEIN: I didn't know what I wanted to do with this CD. I had no idea and I didn't really want to bring other people into it. I didn't want to waste people's time. Also, I guess the last couple Sebadoh albums we put out cost so much money in the end...and for less control of the output, I just figured there had to be a better way of doing things.

SKRATCH: Where did you record?

LOEWENSTEIN: Most of it I recorded at a friend's house on the lake in Campbellsville, Kentucky. They let me stay there while they were away.

SKRATCH: Did you get cabin fever and start banging your head on the equipment, like that piano-playing puppet on Sesame Street, trying to get things just perfect?

LOEWENSTEIN: What? No, I mean I guess there is a danger in working by yourself. But I've been playing music for years. I'd like to think I know when to stop when I'm ahead.

SKRATCH: What guitars did you use?

LOEWENSTEIN: I only used one, actually: my Gibson Explorer. It's cool for a number of reasons, but the headpiece is also at an angle. I don't know if you're familiar with Lynyrd Skynyrd; oh, never mind. The guitarist in Metallica uses one, too. I think the first time I saw one was in a Bob Mould music video. When I bought it, though, I didn't really play it.

SKRATCH: So you've busted it out of the basement?

LOEWENSTEIN: [Laughs.] Yeah. It's a pretty modest record, you know. I didn't even use an amp; I just used a POD.

**SKRATCH:** What's that?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** A lazy man's amp [laughs] You can basically plug it right into the guitar and record.

**SKRATCH:** What's up with the song "Funerals"? It's not your 9/11 anthem, is it?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Oh no, I wrote that quite some time ago. I [went] to a funeral of this guy I knew who had a lot of celebrity friends and for this brief moment in time felt as though I was at some weird social event.

**SKRATCH:** What music did you listen to as a teenager?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Mostly SST bands. Meat Puppets, Saccharine Trust, Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr.

**SKRATCH:** What are you listening to now?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Well, when we were driving over from Washington yesterday we listened to Old Dirty Bastard.

**SKRATCH:** He's in the slammer, isn't he?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Either that or an insane asylum. It's his first album that's sooooo good. He is an unhinged man, but sometimes that makes for good creativity. Oh Kevin just reminded me of Mastodon Atlanta. Have you heard of them?

**SKRATCH:** Er, have now.

**LOEWENSTEIN:** They're extreme post-punk metal-prog rock.

**SKRATCH:** Like System of a Down?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Yeah, I System of a Down played at a thousand miles an hour Mastodon Atlanta's heavy stuff is heavier and their lighter points are more beautiful [i.e., than the corresponding stuff by SoAD]. It's funny you should mention them, though. I wasn't familiar with the band but I listen to this radio show called *coveline*.

**SKRATCH:** Sorry!

**LOEWENSTEIN:** [Laughs] It's a talk show on this alt-rock radio station we have down here and it's hosted by Adam Carolla.

[who's an ex-boxer and his partner on the show Dr. Drew. Anyway, they basically just have callers for teens with sex questions and stuff. But this guy Carolla, he's just... well, he's rude, but it's not spiteful or anything. He just doesn't cut the caller any slack.]

**SKRATCH:** Have you called in?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** No, I'd probably turn into Fan Boy and start crying. Anyway they play a System of a Down song at the end of the show, and it's really starting to grow on me.

**SKRATCH:** Hmmm. So, can you sum up your childhood for me?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** What? You want me to sum it up?

**SKRATCH:** Well, er, are you Jewish?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Uh yeah, sort of.

**SKRATCH:** What do you mean, sort of?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Well, I'm adopted, but it's uh, uh, I'm adopted into the same family. My [biological] mom was pretty young when she had me so I was adopted by her sister.

**SKRATCH:** That's weird. What happened to your biological mom, then?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** She's basically my aunt. I know that sounds strange, but it wasn't ever that strange to me.

**SKRATCH:** Wow. You're just full of surprises. So, do you consider yourself a happy person?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Yeah, I mean as a teenager it was cool not to be, but as I get older I find I want to become more happy.

**SKRATCH:** Are you in love?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Yeah. [Laughs] I've been in love with my wife for years.

**SKRATCH:** How did you guys meet?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Dunno. Friends of friends.

**SKRATCH:** No Eiffel Tower moment or anything?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Well, actually, when we went out together for the first time I was invited by her and a friend of hers to take part in this personality test. When I arrived, her friend sort of disappeared, but I still had to take the test. I wish I could remember the name of it. It's a standard test.

**SKRATCH:** How many questions did you have to answer?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Like 200! So, you know, as a first date that was a bit unnerving.

**SKRATCH:** Well, you must have passed. Hey, what's all that commotion in the background? What's going on?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Oh, nothing. We're just trying to figure out how to work this coffee machine.

**SKRATCH:** Good luck. So do you have any last words?

**LOEWENSTEIN:** Uh, THANKS. Oh, and we'd like to play in Vancouver one of these days.

**SKRATCH:** Yeah, that's what they all say.

**LOEWENSTEIN:** No, really. Canada is great Rush man.

**SKRATCH:** You aren't serious...are you?

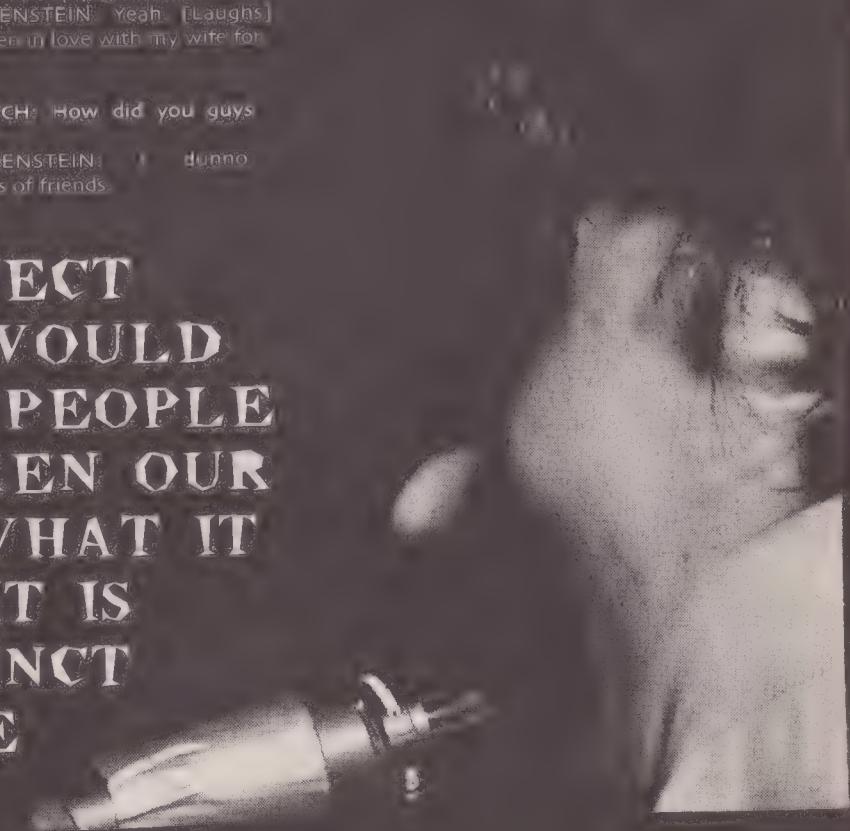
**LOEWENSTEIN:** Yes, we love Rush.

**SKRATCH:** I can hear snickering.

**LOEWENSTEIN:** It's you.

**SKRATCH:** Oh, Touché.

IN A PERFECT  
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# HOUSE OF HEROES

House of Heroes  
Interview by Emily Kandy

"Back when we were No Tag Back, we were on an independent label that fell through"—says Colin Rigsby, drummer for House of Heroes, the renamed (and since relabeled) band, from Columbus, Ohio—"which, as you probably know, independent labels often do. But we were young and naïve, thought it was the bomb..." Now, of course, being in their very, very early 20s, the trio is much more mature and worldly, with a debut album, **WHAT YOU WANT IS NOW**.

When SKRATCH caught up with Rigsby over the phone, he was surprised to learn that Columbus was the site of the first-ever ATM machine.

RIGSBY: Really? I did not know that. Hey, A.J. [Babcock, bass], she says Columbus is the site of the first-ever ATM machine.

SKRATCH: When did you hook up with Vanishing Point Records?

RIGSBY: About six months ago, when we



changed our name. Scott Stillets heard our four-song demo, as House of Heroes; he liked it and said he was going to start a label. It's been going really good.

SKRATCH: So, do you guys go to college?  
RIGSBY: A.J. and Tim [Skipper, vocals and guitar] do, but I have a 9-to-5.

SKRATCH: Why aren't you in school?  
RIGSBY: I'm living the rock 'n' roll dream—I don't need school.

SKRATCH: So was high school a blurry memory of chocolate swirlies?

RIGSBY: No, nothing like that. [Laughs] It was...good times. A.J. and Tim, they went to the same school and they were friends with everyone. Tim played football, and A.J. was in Band. I...well, everyone knew about me, but I wasn't in the IN-crowd. I was more artsy....

SKRATCH: Are Tim and A.J. frat boys?

RIGSBY: No. Tim's just taking courses because his sister is—and so his parents are sort of expecting it. A.J. is taking art and photography courses.

SKRATCH: Do you ever feel the world owes you a favor?

RIGSBY: No. [Laughs] A.J., do you ever feel like the world owes you a favor? No, no way. We're not that arrogant. I'm sure huge rock stars might feel that way, being spoiled...but we're so far, far from being



stars...We keep grounded, you know? We're only here.

SKRATCH: Do you have a girlfriend?

RIGSBY: Yeah, me and A.J. both have girlfriends. Tim is considered the hottest in the band, but he doesn't have a girlfriend. But he does all right. He's confident.

SKRATCH: Does your band have a two-guitar complex?

RIGSBY: [Laughs] Well, it's something we've thought about. We've tried having three guitars, but it doesn't work. We're the most efficient, work the best, the way we are. It would be nearly impossible to have someone else join the group and fit with the three of us.

SKRATCH: What rock radio are you into?

RIGSBY: I've found myself listening to that new Avril Lavigne song.

SKRATCH: Not "Complicated"?

RIGSBY: No, and not "Sk8erboi"; the new one...

SKRATCH: What TV show do you like but are embarrassed to admit to?

RIGSBY: Well, I really like cartoons; but my girlfriend doesn't. I'm not embarrassed to admit it, though... I like all the old stuff, really—the cartoons I watched growing up, like **DARKWING DUCK**, **TAILSPIN**, **CHIP AND DALE RESCUE RANGERS**...

SKRATCH: Time's up! Any last words?

RIGSBY: Yeah, a quote,

an official House of Heroes quote:  
"Don't be fooled by the rock that  
we've got."

SKRATCH: I don't get it.

RIGSBY: It's, you know, that J. Lo song... Well, I'm not going to sing it for you, but you know: "Don't be fooled by the rocks that I've got...you know...used to have a little, now I have a lot. I'm just, I'm just..."

SKRATCH: "...Jenny from the block."

RIGSBY: Yeah. You know...we just don't want people to be fooled. [Laughs]

"We're the most efficient, work the best, the way we are. It would be nearly impossible to have someone else join the group and fit with the three of us."



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### None The Less

Interview by Emily Kandy

Over the last several years, Billy and Raj of None The Less have been fine-tuning their relentless, discordant sound and playing live shows every chance they get, while seeking out permanent bandmates to fill the shoes of original members who play with heart, play hard, and generally agree with the vision of None The Less taking over the world. The singer and drummer evidently have found their matches in Scott and Anthony, a bassist and guitarist who bring a refreshing energy to the table. SIMPLEST TERMS, the bands latest full-length release, proves the labor has not been a waste of time. In fact, it is easily the band's most mature album to date (even if the word "mature" might be a bit of stretch when hanging out with these four-as I did via speakerphone).

**SKRATCH:** Hi, Billy. You guys just had a CD-release party. How'd it go? Good feedback so far?

**BILLY:** The party was great. There were about 300 kids there. We booked the American Legion Hall, put it together.... There were about eight other bands playing, too. Everyone I've talked to who bought the album says they listen to it like four times a day.

**SKRATCH:** What was your first guitar? **BILLY:** I went to see this preview of BILL AND TED'S BOGUS JOURNEY, and there were bands like Primus playing. They had a raffle for a guitar, and people were leaving, so I was just stealing all the leftover tickets. I won the guitar, which was a Gibson SJ-you know, a black, AC/DC type. I remember when I won it I was



so excited I ran to the stage yelling profanities. [Laughs] It had the Keanu Reeves autograph, and the other guy's. But, you know, I rubbed those off right away. [Laughs] I played with that guitar for six years. I still have it [...] I also bought a Les Paul (when I started getting older and knew the difference between guitar sounds).

**SKRATCH:** What sort of music influenced you back then?

**BILLY:** Minor Threat, rougher stuff like that. NOFX has been a huge influence-I think for most of the band, too. But we all listen to different stuff, and I think that comes out in our album. Each song sounds a bit different.

**SKRATCH:** You have any hobbies?

**BILLY:** Uh, no. Computer games.

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** Counterstrike!

**SKRATCH:** What's Counterstrike?

**BILLY:** Oh, a killing game. It's funny, though, because it was through that game that we hooked up with Liberty Records.. I started chatting with some other guy who was playing [at a venue], and he'd heard of our band and gave me his e-mail.

**SKRATCH:** While you were playing the



game?

**BILLY:** Yeah. It turned out he hooked us up. So, God Bless Counterstrike. I also like SpongeBob SquarePants. And I collect STAR WARS toys.

**SKRATCH:** Ack! Too much information.

**BILLY:** Shit, man. I have a stormtrooper tattoo on my leg.

**SKRATCH:** Any parting words?

**BILLY:** Besides my girlfriend, recording this album has been the best experience of my life. We play for fun, we really do. When kids ask us for autographs, that's weird; but if people get out to our show and enjoy it...that's what it's about. Who do you want to talk to now? Raj-Moulin Rouge?

**SKRATCH:** Hi, Raj. Why do they call you Moulin Rouge?

**RAJ:** Billy has a nickname for everyone.

**SKRATCH:** So, do you still talk to Brian Rush [former bassist and original member]?

**RAJ:** Oh yeah. We're still best friends. He left the band to go to school. He's in Humble, Texas, studying botany—which is his thing.

**SKRATCH:** Has it been hard working through the comings and goings of bandmates?

**RAJ:** That was the toughest thing: trying to find people who you clicked with. But this line-up just fell into place. Everything about our music has been getting better, from the writing styles to the technical stuff. We all write songs. Billy does most of the vocals—but it's all a big mix with our band.

**SKRATCH:** How would you describe None The Less's music style?

**RAJ:** [Laughs] Yeah. We're a Mexican Millencolin.

**SKRATCH:** Who are some of your drumming influences?

because I hadn't been involved in recording before, it was an honor to meet Darian. The whole experience with him was awesome. We recorded in a week, and he really taught us about being more consistent—

**SKRATCH:** More consistent how?

**SCOTT:** Well, you know, with pick strokes and the bass being in the right place—really technical stuff you don't think about when you're playing live. He made Raj hit his snare really hard, too. [Laughs]

**SKRATCH:** Was that a good thing?

**SCOTT:** Yeah! Raj was just really tired. Actually, he had to nail the snare to the floor. Darian gave him a few nails and a hammer.

**SKRATCH:** What are your hobbies?

**SCOTT:** Well, professionally, I'm a mechanic and back home I have some cars I'm fixing up.

**SKRATCH:** What kind?

**SCOTT:** [Laughs] I've got a '70

**TONY:** Yeah, yeah, dude, I'm serious. I've just been thinking about this—I'm totally serious: all girls suck. That's just how it is. I mean, I'm a nice gentleman, I find a girl and then...something just goes wrong.

**SKRATCH:** "All girls suck" is a pretty sweeping statement.

**TONY:** Well, my mom's cool. [Laughs] And Raj's mom is pretty nice. But finding a nice girl...maybe it's L.A., but it's like a needle in a haystack down here (so it seems).

**SKRATCH:** What sort of music are you listening to right now?

**TONY:** The Ataris, Teenage Riot, No Motive, Alkaline Trio.

**SKRATCH:** What do you do in your spare time? Do you have a job?

**TONY:** [Laughs] Me? Job? I wake up, go to school, skateboard, chill with my homies. I think I might be a teacher when I grow up—if this doesn't work out.

**SKRATCH:** How'd you get into None The Less?

**TONY:** I lucked out; I just got really lucky. I was on the Internet, and I read the guest book for the band, and it said their last bassist and guitarist were run over by goats.

"It's funny, though, because it

was through that game that we

hooked up with Liberty Records.

**RAJ:** Steve Perkins (Jane's Addiction). I look up to everybody.

**SKRATCH:** Any last words?

**RAJ:** Just that we want to get on the Warped Tour for 2003. We want to take this as far as we can go.

**SKRATCH:** Commandable. Who am I speaking with now?

**SCOTT:** Hey, this is Scott.

**SKRATCH:** Scott, what's your story?  
**SCOTT:** I'm 24, I've been playing with None The Less for over a year. Before this, I'd pretty much given up on my dreams and aspirations of a music career. The band I was in broke up. I'd [also just] broken up with my girlfriend, so when these guys came along and offered me the spot, I was definitely ready. I'd been to see None The Less play live before I knew them, and I looked up to them—so it's cool to be a part of it now.

**SKRATCH:** Who are your influences?

**SCOTT:** Flea from the Chili Peppers, Fat Mike, Rancid, Fletcher from Pennywise.

**SKRATCH:** You guys like recording at Stall#2, it seems.

**SCOTT:** The band's recorded the last two albums there, with Darian Rundall. Members of Pennywise own part of the studio; [they] run it with some other guys. For me,

Falcon Wagon, and a '64 Falcon Sprint.

**SKRATCH:** Cool.

**ANTHONY:** Hi, hey, this is Anthony. How's it going? What are you up to?

**SKRATCH:** Talking to you, Tony. Can SKRATCH call you Tony?

**TONY:** Yeah. Someone just asked me that the other day.

**SKRATCH:** So this is the second time you've ever been a dad? EVER?

**TONY:** Yeah. But it's cool, dude.

**SKRATCH:** What's your story?

**TONY:** I'm a young male looking for a good [Laughs]. I'm one of the guitarists in the band, and I'm left handed.

**SKRATCH:** Shit! Wasn't it hard to learn at first?

**TONY:** Yeah. When I got my first guitar, no one had a left-handed one, so I learned how to play it upside down.

**SKRATCH:** Do you have a life philosophy?

**SKRATCH:** Sorry?

**TONY:** So I sent him e-mails...and the rest is history. But dude, for the longest time—seriously, dudes—they didn't tell me I was in the band. I'd go to rehearsal and jam with them, and then I'd be like, "What? What are they playing me for a fool? Am I in the band yet?"

**SKRATCH:** Were they auditioning other guitarists on the sly?

**TONY:** Oh, yeah, but they were all freaks. Lucky for them I came along to save the day. If we were on Gilligan's Island, I'd be the Professor—the brains of the operation. [Laughs]

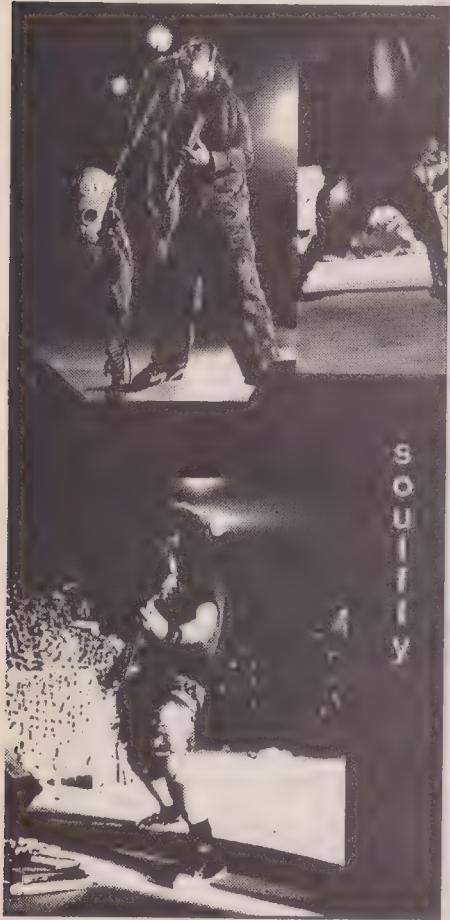
**SKRATCH:** You're a big talker.

**TONY:** Yeah. They're gonna beat me up after this.

Check these guys out at your local music store. For all you know, their poster could be on the side of a building near you! For more details and diversions, check out the band's Website at [www.nonetheless.org](http://www.nonetheless.org).

# SOULFLY DOWNTHE SUN NORTHSIDE KINGS E-RACE LIKTER

10/23/02 @ the Ventura Theater  
Text and photos by Mark A. Whitaker



When I found out that Soulfly was going to be playing at the Ventura Theater, I knew I could not miss seeing this show—especially since I missed it at the Universal Amphitheater with Slayer. I asked to get off early from work so I could make the show and not miss any of the opening bands. I almost ended up missing this show, too, thanks to my co-worker, Heather who decided that she wasn't going to be able to make it in to work that night. My boss was cool about it, though, and called someone else to cover; so I was off to see Soulfly (as well as see the other bands, since I had not heard of them before and was curious as to know what they might sound like).

Unfortunately the show had started early to accommodate all the bands playing that night. I barely made it in time in to catch Northside Kings taking the stage. These guys were intense and brutal. They played a solid set of fast-paced, skull-splitting metal. The first

thing I noticed while watching Northside Kings play was that the lighting rigs were dropped down, creating an interesting effect. It was really hard shooting pictures because a lot of the time the lights were glaring right into my camera lens. It was a cool effect, though. From the reaction of the crowd I could tell a lot of people were really into Northside Kings, because they were right up front hanging on for dear life as they got slammed up against the barricade by people circle-pitting; but they didn't complain. The singer for Northside Kings, Danny, was really good. His vocals were clean and intelligible, and he can roar with the best of them. He even dedicated a song to SKRATCH, which I thought was pretty cool of him. The guitars were in perfect harmonious discord as they churned out one driving tune after another. The drummer was insane. He was pounding the shit out of his drum kit,

according to downthesun. And an ugly, unaccommodating truth it is." Seeing as how the band has a split personality made things very interesting. downthesun is very full of energy and will stop at nothing to bring its brand of the truth to light. Aaron would get up front and sing while on either side of him the bass and guitar players were rocking out (along with person manning the sampler). Then suddenly Sa-Tone would creep up and in a fit of rage would spasm and convulse as he spit out his side of the truth. These guys really pulled it off, giving you a double blast of their truth. While watching downthesun, I knew the fans were well pleased with its performance and message, as I could feel the barrier shaking as people were slammed up against it. I glanced at the people up front, and they were singing along with no worry about the minor convenience of being slammed into a hard barricade. Their only concern was downthesun, and everything else was unimportant.



giving it such a beating that as soon as they had finished playing it promptly fell over like a dead horse ridden too hard.

Next up was a band called downthesun. I had no idea who these guys were, much less what the band sounded like. I found out (after doing a little investigative research) that they are on Roadrunner Records and have a unique way of doing things. According to the band's bio, they are yin and yang. "The Ying [sic]: Aaron is the pure metal front man, blending mood, melody and madness into a single voice. The Yang: Clutching a ragged doll in one hand, face tattooed and jerking like an epileptic being electrocuted, it's Sa-Tone who breathes in and spits out THE TRUTH

Soulfly took the stage next. By this time everybody was really excited: the main event was upon them; the band they were waiting to see was there and ready to rock. Soulfly is an amazing band to watch live. Soulfly's albums do not fully prepare you for the intensity of a live show. Mikey, Soulfly's guitarist, was rocking out, holding his guitar pointed skywards for most of the first song. Since I was only allowed to photograph three songs, after the third song I grabbed my camera bag and went to watch the rest of the show by the bar. As I was writing down notes on the show, I saw a guy come walking towards me, his mouth dripping blood. That's how intense Soulfly's shows are: people come out bleeding. Max has a really great voice, as I could clearly hear him yelling out his political messages to the drummer's pounding. You could even feel the walls shaking from the power of the drums. Soulfly played several songs from SOULFLY 3, which is its latest release (available from Roadrunner Records and in independent record stores (in other words Wal-Mart ain't carrying it)). For one of its songs, I think Max was singing in Portuguese, because I could not understand much of the song. Soulfly had lots of crowd reaction. There were people singing, dancing, and crowd-surfing. I saw one group of fans waving the flag of Brazil in honor of Soulfly. I recognized several of its older songs, which I was glad to hear because I'm more familiar with the older material than the SOULFLY 3 album. The drummer Roy was even going crazy as he pounded out an amazing drum solo, with all the stage lighting going wild around him. After Roy's solo, he was joined by Max and the rest of the band in a tribal song that consisted of nothing but drum beats. I counted seven drummers, all lined up and pounding their drums in time. This song also met with a lot of approval from fans. My night complete was when I heard a familiar, ominous pounding. I couldn't believe I was hearing the all to familiar sounds of "Arise" by Sepultura (Max's previous band). That song just got the crowd going nuts. After "Arise", Danny from Northside Kings came on-stage and sang a song with Soulfly. downthesun also sang a song. Aaron and Sa-Tone merged their vocals seamlessly and added to the song, making it seem as if this song was written just for them. When Soulfly sang "Eye for an Eye", the whole theater was singing the chorus. Seeing that much enthusiasm, I was glad that I did not miss Soulfly play this time. Getting to see it in a smaller venue like the Ventura Theater—as opposed to the stadium shows Soulfly has been playing lately—made the show so much better.



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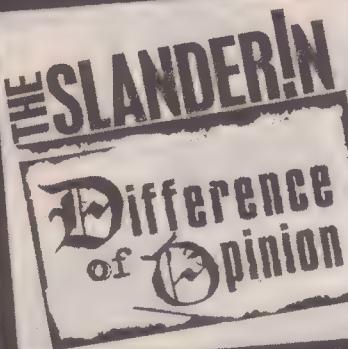
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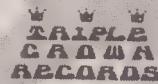


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# THE VIRUS THE VOIDS THE RIFFS DAMNATION SMUT PEDDLERS

12/28/02 @ the Glasshouse (Pomona, CA)

By Marcus Solomon  
Photos by Mark Ventua



youngsters who know and respect their punk roots.

First on tap was the Redondo Beach mainstay Smut Peddlers. Standing outside talking to the way-cool Glasshouse manager Eric, I heard the new song "Surfer's Grave" drifting out to the sidewalk. Bidding my gracious host a quick adieu, I ran inside and pushed to front and center for a faceful of one of my personal favorites. Without missing a beat, drummer Julia Smut gave me the "what's up" head nod, to which I responded with the one-handed "devil horns" finger gesture. Smut Peddlers belted out a virtually flawless set consisting of power-chord, infectious obscenity laced with ironic wisdom. Ransom is one of the rare individuals who can blend effortlessly from incendiary "fuck everything" lyrics to shouted statements of gen-

Damnation is high-speed evil, but leaning more toward hard rock than metal. However, there was enough of a hint of steel to give the music the proper shine. I was very glad to observe the band not overdoing the "evil band" thing and keep it fun, much akin to Penis Flytrap and The Dwarves.

"You just missed a great band." John Ransom mentioned in passing while I interviewed The Voids backstage. I heard the same from a few other people that night. Oh, well, I will just have to catch The Riffs some other time. I trust Mr. Ransom's judgement—and maybe you should, too.



smut peddlers

uine insight. Smut is one of the best drummers in rock today, amazingly technical without losing the driving beat, seeming to act as a conductor who often calls the shots from behind. Guitarists Roger Ramjet and Sean Mallard function as a wall-of-guitars unit, while Gish thumps the deep bass reminiscent of Mike Watt (former Minuteman and still a great performer). Playing a host of tunes from its new CD, ISM, Smut Peddlers got the night off to a strong start. It must suck to be the first band for a gig, but, considering the sizable crowd and enthusiasm, this was one of the most intense openings I have seen in a long time. Of the many well-received numbers, "Let's Get Fucked Up" may have taken over as the current crowd favorite. This vigorous and humorous bit is featured on the JACK-ASS soundtrack, and the band has recorded a video for it to be included in the movie's DVD edition. Gish got a bit tongue-tangled during his spoken-word parts of "Fuck You, That's Why", but everyone seemed to love, anyway. Everyone should fire up the bong and raise a brew to this group of skate-surf miscreants.

Damnation hit the stage second, and all I got to say is, Damn! Okay, I will say a bit more. At first I thought this was going to be some stupid, contrived "evil" bullshit, but these boys can really play! Before the show, vocalist Shaun Karma told me, "If you have any trouble getting in, just call for me." What a nice guy—and the chicks really lust for his bod. To quote the band's bio, "This is raging horror punk." Even so, Karma's vocals are amazingly good; the guy can really sing!

Philly-based, neon-haired The Virus provided the climax of the evening. Screaming teen angst and thunderous guitars are still hip. This band really knows how to put on a show and whip the kids into a swirling frenzy of leather, studs, and hair spray. In fact, a conservative Christian friend of mine was so overwhelmed that she apparently sold her soul to rock 'n' roll, disappearing into the enormous, churning pit during the song "Full Circle". Afterward, she couldn't talk because she had been screaming so much and so loudly. It was good to see someone break out of the mental prison for awhile. Rock-oriented punkness with a dash of messy metal, The Virus will cure you of normalcy. Like I already said, this band created the largest circle pit I have seen in about 20 years (for a venue of this size, anyway). The swirling mass of bodies covered the floor space from the front of the stage to almost the back of the room. It was approximately 50 feet wide, and I could feel the wind whipped up by the mass of bodies moving past. The band's encore was genuinely called for, but I hate it when you know one was planned. Recorded air-raid sirens announced this encore. Contrived encores are kind of like diet soda: they are sweet, but the sugar is not real. It was interesting to note that the crowd size had diminished by about 40% by the encore performance. I wonder if the departed were just stupid or in agreement that planned encores diminish the performance. Who knows? Let's take a survey. In the meantime, visit The Virus at [www.viruspunks.com](http://www.viruspunks.com).

One last thing: it was a nice touch for the Glasshouse to play The Clash in between the sets to honor the recently-departed Joe Strummer. Time marches on.

"I think I just saw GBH back in their prime!" I said to Smut Peddlers vocalist John Ransom as we exited the show in reference to The Virus's performance. "Yeah, but I think they just did it better!" Ransom replied. The Virus blew into Pomona and whipped up a whirlwind of a pit more huge than anything I'd seen since the mid '80s. Socially-conscious teen angst, enormous colored Mohawks, and spikes are as good today as they ever were. It was amazing to see how many exuberant fans this Philadelphia-based five-piece drew to the Inland Shiptire. This was a wonderful show from

# NASHVILLE PUSSY BLARE BITCH PROJECT BANTAM SHOTS FIRED LOGAN'S HEROES ETCHED IN STONE

12/31/2002 @ the Whisky  
Story and photos by Mark A. Whitaker

With the end of 2002 close at hand, I wanted to make the best of it. I wanted to celebrate the end of 2002 with a bang and ring in the New Year with a story to tell while sitting around the old folk's home reminiscing about times gone by. Several of my friends were going to celebrate in the traditional way: go get drunk, pass out, and wake up with a hangover the next day. That wasn't going to really do it for me, so I headed out to Hollywood—the Whisky, to be exact—to celebrate New Year's with Nashville Pussy and friends. With six bands playing, this was going to be a fun show with lots of variety. Being that it was New Year's Eve, the Whisky gave out party hats and, for those 21 & older, a ticket for a free glass of champagne to toast New Year's. That was a thoughtful touch that made the show seem a lot friendlier, more like a party with rock bands than a normal show.

First off was Etched in Stone, a solid rock band with old-school metal guitar riffs, slides, solos—all that shit. It was great, the evening was starting off to a great start. The members of Etched in Stone are really talented musicians, especially the bass player, who played with his bare feet. That was amazing to see: a guy playing the bass guitar with his feet!

Starting off with a fade from black, Logan's Heroes came on playing a tight garage-rock style of music in the vein of The Strokes. Things were going well for this heroic bunch, but right at the end of a wailing guitar solo, Logan's Heroes' bass player started having technical difficulties. Luckily, a roadie for Nashville Pussy stepped up, and between the bass player and the roadie Logan's Heroes managed to pull it all together and finished with a roar of applause from the crowd.

Loud, proud, and metal, Shots Fired stormed the stage next, playing so hard I could literally feel the walls shaking from the musical assault. The singer for Shots Fired had a good vocal range with a wide variety of material for the band's set. The band played well, with a lot of driving guitars and pounding drum beats. For the last song, the singer encouraged everyone "to have a good time, go get fucked up, beat somebody up, and beat the kids because life sucks—so wear a helmet."

Ladies and gentlemen, coming to you tonight all the

way from New York City: Bantam! While only three members strong, Bantam played with enough energy to keep the show rocking hard. The female singer and guitarist was an added bonus, as she had a really nice voice but with lungs to yell out the choruses. The fans were enjoying the show, bobbing their heads in time to the music. Every so often the bass player would join the guitarist for a friendly guitar duel. During one song the drummer lost his grip on one of his sticks. It flew in the air, and, without missing a beat, he reached out and grabbed it like nothing. Bantam was given a great response by the crowd as the band finished its set.

Blare Bitch Project was up next, performing a special tribute for Bianca of Betty Blowtorch. I had never heard Betty Blowtorch, but I knew what it was about, so I figured this would be some good rock music. I wasn't disappointed: BBP played loud and fast, with the dial cranked to 11. BBP got a great response, with lots of people cheering and singing during one of the last songs it played. Blare dedicated it to Bianca and invited several friends on stage to help sing along. It was a fitting tribute, with people singing, dancing, and one girl even shaking a tambourine. It was a good song.

It was nearing midnight, and up next was Nashville Pussy, back again by popular demand to the Whisky for another New Year's party. I had been hearing good reviews about Nashville Pussy's recent shows and couldn't wait to see for myself what I had been missing. Nashville Pussy started off playing a couple songs, then Blaine stopped and asked for a countdown to midnight. The clock ticked away the seconds, and then 2002 was over and it was 2003. Now that it was a new year, it was time to play another song. I don't remember how many songs Nashville Pussy played, but I remember that Blaine's lecture on "You Give Drugs a Bad Name" it was quite entertaining. Nashville Pussy even played one of my all time favorites, "All Fucked Up". Not wanting to be left out, Katie Lynn was playing harder and with more confidence since the first time I saw Nashville Pussy. Not that Katie Lynn was ordinarily shy; it's just that she was putting more style into her performance. Jeremy kept on track with his aggressive drum skills, while Ruyter raged on her guitar. In no time Ruyter was feeling the heat and took off her shirt (to countless cheers of approval from all the guys in the audience) and played on dressed only in her bra and pants. Some time later Blaine and Ruyter performed the "bottle trick," in which Blaine opens up a bottle of beer and holds it steady while Ruyter leans back and down the whole bottle while still playing her guitar. For a grand finale, Ruyter got on her knees, leaned back, tore the strings off her guitar like she was possessed. It was beautiful.

## THE BUSSTOP HURRICANES

Jan. 16, 2003 @ the Continental Room (Fullerton, CA)  
By Gregory Moore

A few years ago I happened to be at the Hub when The Busstop Hurricanes played. Fast-forward to maybe a couple of months ago and I'm in the Continental Room for the first time. It's a find for me: a swank, plush, lounge-type bar with just a hint of dive bar about it—perfect. Suddenly curtains rise on a tiny stage area at one end of the place: it's The Busstop Hurricanes. I

wasn't there to see live music, but I'm interested to see TBH, interested because here it is several years later and this band doesn't seem to have changed its aesthetic much to better capitalize on what will give it the best change to sell records, instead sticking to its unique brand of music—sort of a Golden Earring meets The Blasters and The Fabulous Thunderbirds—and sticking to it with conviction. I had to leave early into the band's set, but I resolved that at a later date I would willingly augment my usual SKRATCH duties as proofer and columnist to give TBH some press.

And so I am once again in the Continental Room on the 16th as the members of The Busstop Hurricanes take the stage (which is backed by lovely red curtains that would make David Lynch giddy). It's a good crowd, everybody looking nice and clean, many obviously familiar with TBH. The set opens with an instrumental, a mellow rockabilly-meets-surf tune with that plush, lounge-music swing. It seems the Continental Room and TBH were made for each other; I doubt you'd like one and not the other. The mix and volume are perfect, allowing you to hear everything without wishing you could hear it a little less. Right away TBH's aesthetic is clear: no one overplays, each member confining him-/herself to serving the overall song—which doesn't mean that the individual parts aren't fun to play. (Very different music, but think about the playing on Blur's self-titled album.) The music is handled by J. Edgar Hoover (bass), Twisty Lem'ons (guitar), Chief "Joey" Tambourino (drums), and Caesar Clave (trumpet); and over the course of the evening they moved through their 20+ songs with a nicely controlled energy, feeling both tight and live, a band that seem very comfortable playing together. After the opening number they were joined by vocalist Sammy Tonic. Like the music, his vocals did not lack for energy or crispness, and his mobile stage presence (which was by no means confined to the miniature stage) was a nice adjunct to shimmying of his bandmates. Both of the quintet's first two sets (there was also a short third set) seemed to become increasingly energetic as they wore on, at the same time expanding on the swank foundation of its music (songs like "Monte Carlo" could be used to score a montage in a Rat Pack road movie), eventually smoothly moving into territory that you wouldn't necessarily have expected. For example, the fifth song of the second set, "Reentry", has little or no trace of the TBH swing (more akin to the spirit of the swinging passages you occasionally come across in The Pixies and The Cure than with swing dancing), instead being smooth, tuneful alt-pop. Along these lines, the band did two covers: "London Calling" (as an homage to the late Joe Strummer, of course) and a Cure-sounding version of Duran Duran's "Planet Earth". These were obviously the band's least well-rehearsed (because this sounds like a VERY well-rehearsed band)—and I later found that this was the first time they'd played either; but what came across from these was not that they were poorly done (they weren't) but the band's sense of fun. This is a fun band—and it's a unique style of fun.

All five bandmembers were dressed in a manner concomitant with their music: swank, smooth, lively. As for their performances, Tonic's vocals are full-throated and confident, dripping with a swank blues tone and personality—which his peregrinations only augment; Tambourino's drumming is tight, busy enough but adhering to that jazz adage that a drummer's doing a good job when he doesn't draw attention to himself; Clave's trumpet weaves its way in and out of songs almost imperceptibly, so well does it add a layer instead of taking center stage; Hoover's stand-up bass

work not only gives the songs a punchy bop but also the kind of texture that gives him away as an out-of-the-closet-and-proud fan of the great arrangers of the mid 20th century; similarly, Lemons's smooth and subdued guitar work reveals her to be in the Johnny Marr camp and not in the Steve Vai school. (I found out after the set that the band is, ultimately, a sextet featuring a second guitarist (who is able to make it down from up north every third show or so, I am told). I don't doubt this gives TBH an extra layer, but the fact is that I would never have guessed anything was missing from the stuff I heard that night.)

The Busstop Hurricanes is not a band out to conquer the world; its members play for the love of what they're doing—and it shows. They are signed to Bite Mark Records, and as of now have produced only a six-song EP, THE SATELLITE ROOM. However, they do plan to release their first full-length sometime in the summer. Meanwhile, they continue to play live about three times a month—again, simply for the love of it. The Continental Room is a regular place to catch them (every other Thursday...and what a place! No cover, great decor, wonderful atmosphere...just check it out: 115 W. Santa Fe, the south end of Downtown Fullerton), but you can find a full (and regularly-updated) listing of where and when they can be caught on the band's Website, [www.busstop hurricanes.com](http://www.busstop hurricanes.com). If you like the idea of a band that puts on an excellent, energetic show without pretense and that becomes part of the room instead of just playing at it, then The Busstop Hurricanes is a must-see.

## THE DONNAS OK GO PLUS ONE

1/25/03 @ THE EL REY (LOS ANGELES, CA)

Text and Photos By Marcus Solomon

This show was billed as a "double-headliner," meaning that both The Donnas and Ok Go were equal in being the main attractions. This event was sold out months in advance, a feat either of the headliners could have easily accomplished alone. Because SKRATCH has printed reviews of two previous The Donnas shows, I have been asked to keep their portion of this review brief. With these women rockers currently taking the airwaves by storm, it is a simple matter to find the band on MTV I and II, on commercial radio, and all over the Internet. I have been told the band will be on the cover of SEVENTEEN MAGAZINE soon. It always kind of sucks when secret gets out, but it is great to see people succeed doing what they love.

First on the bill was the warm up band The Plus Ones. This fine band consists of four talented young

nation of two guitars, a bass, drums, and a keyboard have infinite potential, and this band may very well force the homogenized music industry to break free of its mundane and predictable output. Many music journalists have compared this band to Weezer, but that is a surface observation lacking in awareness and depth. There are so many musical influences here that it is impossible to list them all. This comparison is inadequate, but I point the reader more in the direction of Beck,—but with more powerful presentation and diversity. Ok Go seamlessly blends a plethora of influences, tempos, and styles with skill, passion, wit, humor, and bucketloads of fun. Vocalist and frontman Damien Kulash may very well prove to be a Renaissance man. He is saturated with charisma, good looks, and talent. Damien can lull you into a mystical trance with his rich and diverse voice, then lead you into hysterical laughter. The band performed



men and one equally talented female rhythm guitarist (who is strikingly beautiful). The music they generate is upbeat and catchy, but not in a sappy or predictable way. Their songs are enthusiastic and well-crafted, ranging from power-pop to danceable tunes of deeper emotion. Overall, this group has a fuzzy, indie-rock sound with rich, pleasing vocals. I was often reminded of The Buzzcocks and early Elvis Costello. Drummer Luis Illades has left Pansy Division to bring his vivacious pounding to this unit, and he is a show unto himself. He plays with such unbridled joy that one member of the audience commented that he appears to be having multiple orgasms. The Plus Ones was well-received by the audience, and it was a promising start to a fantastic evening. After the show, I observed several young men standing around the pretty guitarist, shuffling their feet while trying to think of interesting things to say to her. I wonder what it's like to have groupies.

Ok Go quickly took the stage and really got things going by starting off with "You're So Damn Hot". This number is one of several radio-friendly and catchy tunes that the public may be familiar with, but this was merely the tip of the iceberg. Many in the crowd were there specifically to enjoy Ok Go, while the rest of us were given our first taste of what may prove to be another revolution in music. The combi-

the hauntingly beautiful "Shortly Before the End", and I noticed that several people actually had tears in their eyes. Later, we were all treated to the strangely riveting "Unrequited Orchestra of Locomotion", which is as much a performance-art piece as it is an unforgettable oddball sonic work. Imagine a semi-industrial Monty Python doing a maniacal nonsense Zen musical...Forget it. You simply have to experience this one live, as there is no way it translates. Other standout tunes included "C-C-C-Cinnamon Lips", "Don't Ask Me", "The Fix Is In", and the radio hit "Get Over It". My personal favorite was the performance of "We Dug a Hole". This tune is somewhat of a minimalist presentation, with a mid-tempo keyboard (sounding more like a cornet) taking the fore. "We dug a hole / And put our heads in it." I believe this lyric is Damien's succinct observation of society in general. If not, then I can assure you this is my observation of society in general. Of course, Ok Go was called back for a well-received encore. I want to thank this amazing group for helping me to break free of the musical rut I was unknowingly creating for myself. The band's CD is the self-titled and was released by Capitol Records. Visit the band's Website at [www.okgo.net](http://www.okgo.net).

Last and certainly not least was The Donnas, introduced by the Yoda of rock 'n' roll himself, Mr. Rodney Bingenheimer. Of course The Donnas rocked



the place so hard that the El Rey ceiling should have fallen down again. The band started out with its first bona-fide hit, "Take It Off", to wildly screaming fans. Apparently, being on Saturday Night Live has heightened the group's sex appeal. A few young male fans got tossed out of the show for reaching over the barricades to try to touch them. Weird.

The L.A. WEEKLY correctly pointed out this was going to be one of the best shows of the week. However, the paper was in error in comparing The Donnas to the '80s fluff-metal band Cinderella. This ain't no cotton-candy fairy hair metal! This is rock-hard partycore owing more to Angus Young and early Wire. After the show, photographer Heather was the only one admitted to The Donnas' dressing room, and she hung out with them for quite a while. How fun is that for a 15-year-old young lady? Thanks to everyone on the stage and the multitude of people behind the scenes who made this night one of the greatest times I have ever had.

# UNDER OATH DIE RADIO DIE WAITING FOR AUTUMN BLEAK DECEMBER NEVER SO YOUNG

February 7th, 2003 @ the Showcase Theater  
by Dug

Just when you thought it was safe to snap your fingers to P.O.D. and say that Christian rock is a good thing, along comes the latest Spirit-filled mutant offspring of hardcore and emo: screamo. Actually, there was a lot of spirited debate among the hundreds of wildly-dressed young people outside Corona's premier (and only non-alcoholic) night spot about whether all five of the night's bands were true screamo bands.

The first band to take the stage, Never So Young, proceeded to plow through a set of music that could make your grass die. If you've never heard true screamo before, just imagine a nice, melodic emo band tooling along, then suddenly downing a 12-ounce glass of hydrochloric acid. The vocal theatrics drown out guitars, drums, overhead jets, and any other noise within blocks. Eventually, small flecks of blood and tiny chunks of vocal chords and tonsils begin to spatter the microphone. Just when you think the lead singer's head is going to explode (*à la SCANNERS*), he falls to

the stage in silence, and the band picks up the soft emo melody again. Never So Young did an admirable job for an opening act, though the screaming seemed more than just a little forced at times. I guess that, if you're an opening act, you go with your strong suit. In fact, the most impressive thing about this band was the diminutive, blond guitarist who could have been as old as 14 or as young as nine. He had a blazing, cool reverse mullet (which also seems to be a staple of the burgeoning Christian screamo scene): it was a business-like trim in the back and on the sides of his head, and a long mop of straight hair that hung in front and totally obscured his face. I guess it fits right in with that "hear no evil, see no evil" parable.

The second band, Bleak December, was a lot like the previous band: all high-decibel growling and hair-tossing. These bands have an incredible penchant for flipping their guitars around and leaping up and down on stage in a violent display of their commitment to God. I kept waiting for someone to accidentally belt somebody in the face with the backside of some tuning pegs, but I guess if He watches the sparrow, He keeps an eye on these antics as well. As I struggled to decipher the raspy lyrics I heard a couple of screamo authorities next to me remark, "Hey, the vocals sound tight tonight!" There is a phenomenon in the Christian world known as "glossolalia," in which true believers speak in unintelligible languages that can only be deciphered by other Spirit-filled believers. My only assumption was that they must have all been true believers. With a name like "Bleak December," the band should have been putting Dickens stories to its music. The lead singer for this band was also blessed with a stunning, jet-black reverse mullet. Very catchy.

The third band, Waiting for Autumn, was the band I had really been looking forward to, though I'd heard only its most recent CD and never seen the band live. These guys could be the heavyweight kings of the screamo scene, with tremendous vocals, tight, blistering-hot guitar riffs, and a pace that actually seems to make sense with this style of music. Musically, they rule; but damn, they looked like hell. The band consists of four young men, all about 5' 7" and with short, dark hair, nice, collared shirts, and a vocalist that looks like John Popper of Blues Traveler with the voice and stage presence of Meatloaf. If it weren't for the tremendously catchy music the band plays, these five guys would look right at home at a Wednesday night Bible study. They ripped through their set with fierce abandon and a professionalism rarely seen at small clubs. One of the biggest problems in any genre is when all the bands start to sound like each other. This band won't have that problem if it continues to write the catchy, hook-laden tunes that made its stage show so appealing. You can have all the reverse mullets and stage energy in the world, but if you can't separate yourself from the pack with some brilliant music, you're doomed to weeknight shows at small clubs. If any of these bands has a chance to break out of the mold, it has to be this one. As a matter of fact, I think it already has.

The fourth band of the evening, Die Radio Die, was a pleasant surprise. While playing music in the screamo genre, the band included a lot of clever guitar dissonance. This gave the band a quality much like Sonic Youth. The audience had a chance to catch its collective breath before the band launched back into a crunching melody. Deftly switching from dissonance to emo while actually enunciating the vocals gave the

music a lot more punch than monotonous repetition. Take note, all you aspiring screamo bands: if you want fans to go home humming one of your tunes, give them something to hum and a distinct sound to remember you by.

After doing an informal poll of the crowd on Friday night, I was able to determine that at least half of the packed house was there just to see the headliner, Under Oath. Although there was a lot of confusion among the audience as to what type of music the band really played, there was an overall agreement that it was, first and foremost, a Christian band. Evidently the confusion stemmed from the band's change in direction from its early music. Everyone agreed that it had once been a hardcore band that had "sold out" and gone screamo. I always thought selling out implied that there was someone out there to sell to...so someone must be buying this stuff, somewhere. By the time the six members of Under Oath took the stage, the hormonally-charged crowd had upped the temperature in the crowded venue to at least 40 degrees higher than the outside temperature. It was one hot, sweaty mass of flesh that greeted the band around 11 p.m. From the bombastic opening chords and howling vocals, that mass of flesh began to surge. A lively mosh pit opened in front of the stage, and three or four drenched bodies constantly crawled across the crowd, dived from the stage, or grabbed the mic for sing-alongs. With a stage presence that consisted of a whirlwind of flying guitars, hair and head bobs that would give a chiropractor a wet dream, and a non-stop barrage of screams and growls, the band was mesmerizing. Of course, I've always considered Spinal Tap mesmerizing as well. Under Oath reminded me of the legendary Spinal Tap on speed and playing Motorhead tunes. It was one of the funniest stage shows I've seen in years. It was also some of the highest energy hardcore I'd heard in a while. I asked some of the fans when the band would start playing the newer "sell-out" tunes. "Oh no," they would say, "this is the new stuff." Hmmm.

Perhaps the best gauge of popularity for any new genre is fan support. This show was freaking packed. It was also one of the better fashion shows for the Showcase, as kids who don't do drugs or alcohol have a lot more time to dye their hair, decorate leather jackets, and get tattoos and piercings. There was an amazing amount of Christians at the gig sporting huge, colorful tattoos and some serious face metal. The Christian "urban primitive" subculture was as fascinating as the whole screamo scene.

Of course, the Showcase management loved the show. They had hired extra security to deal with the large crowd—and then realized they had to deal only with a whole bunch of really polite young people who didn't smoke, drink, or brawl. Unfortunately there's always a bad egg in every bunch—like the swaggering little dip shit that looked for the least possible place in the club to start a mosh. He proceeded to push around a bunch of girls and guys that didn't want to dance as he slipped into his own frantic, lonesome, orgiastic fantasy. Oh yes, and then there was the car that blazed by the parking-lot rail at 50 mph and then skidded sideways, barely avoiding two other cars in front of the venue. And towards the end of the evening a carload of punks did egg some of the kids standing outside by the entrance. But hey, even with all the accessories in the world, they're still Christians—so they're bound to take a little persecution.



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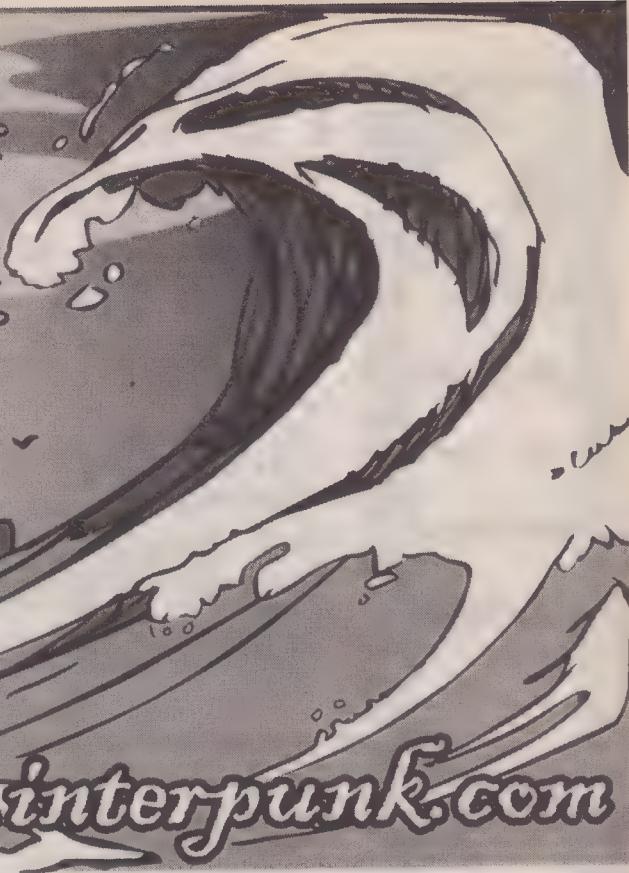
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PODSTAR  
LOVELY 32  
NOISOME RECORDS

Podstar could be the bastard sons (maybe the product of early '80s drunken mayhem) of The Replacements. The song structure, the odes to drink and love's elusive sweetness, and the piano tune at the album's mid-point all served to remind me of The Replacements; however, unlike a band like The Goo Goo Dolls, these kids from Manhattan, Kansas, have happened upon the Replacements vibe naturally and not ripped it off. And I like The Replacements-therefore, I like Podstar. LOVELY 32 was produced by Ed Rose, who has worked with The Get Up Kids and Ultimate Fakebook, and he helps Podstar's sophomore record sound jammy and natural without coming off as overly contrived. Bravo to all involved.

-H. Barry Zimmerman



SOMEHOW HOLLOW  
BUSTED WINGS AND RUSTED HALOS  
VICTORY

Rising from the remains of the seminal underground outfit Grade, Somehow Hollow's 11-track debut shows signs of the glory and power that was Grade, but in the end falls short. Don't fret, folks, because the band's output is as sleek and muscular as a luxury car. The stellar music that made Grade great is present here, including the same slash-and-burn guitar work and tight changes. The lack of an original voice, both vocally and musically, seems to hamper the group. Somehow Hollow sounds a bit...well, hollow, without the passionate screams and heartfelt yowls that Grade brought to the table. We can all keep our fingers crossed for a Grade reunion, but in the meantime we'll have to settle for the unbalanced aggression of Somehow Hollow, a musical treat despite the absence of a major part of the machine that made it all work so well. [www.somewhowholow.com](http://www.somewhowholow.com)

-Mike SOS



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JENNIE BOMB  
JETSET RECORDS

Scandinavian rock seems to be the buzz of late; but, if I can, I would like to distance this four-piece female rock-punk combo from the rest of the Swedish man-club rockstars out there. Imagine, if you will, the sheer rock attitude and grit of The Runaways, the jaded and misspent youth of late period Pandoras, throw in some heavy testosterone riffage of AC/DC and Bachman Turner Overdrive, and you get some nasty, spit-in-your-face RAWK! There are 11 songs on this album, and not a power ballad in sight. These tough-as-nails chicks start the damage off right with the hell on heels rock anthem "Alright, Alright", which is, simply put, a riff-happy monster of a song that pulls you in from the first hook. I only wish today's crop of rock revivalists out there would take note. Why does it take four hot chicks to put some balls back in rock? I am sure all the answers lie subliminally somewhere on this disc. Guaranteed to be the next big-and I mean HUGE-thang!

-Larry Lugz



BURNING BRIDES  
FALL OF THE PLASTIC EMPIRE  
V2

Dirty rock 'n' roll from the City of Brotherly Love is what the trio known as Burning Brides delivers on its 10-track disc. Straight from the garage with the stench of old motor oil and mildew still fresh, Burning Bride's grooves are wah-wah-drenched and LSD-laden. It's up to you if you'd like to light the lava lamp, but it'll only enhance the experience that this rocking band brings. Sometimes slow and grinding, sometimes evoking a go-go dance, but altogether fuzzed out, Burning Brides has rekindled the smoldering flames on the side of the Chevy van for one more cross-country trek. Pack your bags and tune in, baby.

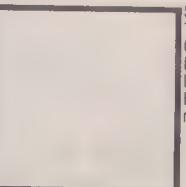
-Mike SOS



HER SPACE HOLIDAY  
MANIC EXPRESSIVE  
TIGER STYLE RECORDS

I first became aware of her space holiday while sitting in the back of Portfolio's in Long Beach and wondering about that lovely sound coming from the front enough to go up and ask. It was hsh's SILENT FILMS, which I was able to pick up at fingerprints. A friend also came to like it, and he (at random) picked up MANIC EXPRESSIVE-which I, in turn, came to like even better. SILENT FILMS is basically nothing more than hsh mastermind Marc Bianchi laying guitar overdriven and a vocal track on top of six very spare sequencer tracks. On MANIC EXPRESSIVE, the guitar is generally only an adjunct to the lush but compact synth work and gentle trip-hop beats, sort of a melding of SILENT FILMS with Portishead's DUMMY. Bianchi's flat monotone finds a perfect vehicle for the drive of his quietly dusky songs...or vice versa...something like that. Speaking of the songs, if you like hsh, there isn't a bad one in the bunch, as hsh is a master of being the best hsh it can be. I love this album.

-whothefuckisme!



SWITCHFOOT  
THE BEAUTIFUL LETDOWN  
COLUMBIA/RED INK RECORDS

Mid-tempo alternative radio rock would be my summary of this album. It sounds like The Lemonheads or Foo Fighters combined with Third Eye Blind and Sublime. Well produced and very radio-oriented, but nothing ground-breaking here.

-Joey Housewrecker



HOUSE OF HEROES  
WHAT YOU WANT IS NOW  
VANISHING POINT RECORDS

Ultra-polished radio rock. Four rock songs that are very well produced...but just didn't do it for me. If mid-tempo semi-alternative rock is your bag, then I suppose these guys do it as well as anyone else.

-Joey Housewrecker



THE BREEDERS  
TITLE TK  
ELEKTRA

Kim Deal is no great lyricist, but I don't know that she's trying to be. Her words do sound a bit like the seeming nonsense you'd hear in her old band, but Black Francis was clever, erudite, funny, and bizarre in The Pixies, whereas Deal doesn't have much to offer on any of these counts. In another contrast with Frank Black, it's Deal's post-Pixies project that realizes the hopes of that band's fans. Black was clearly the mastermind behind The Pixies, but, as his solo work has demonstrated (to this reviewer, at least), while The Pixies may have been his brainchild, the magic was collective, as if the quartet could channel that certain something only when assembled. Deal's role was obviously pivotal, and more for her vocals and feel for the absurd than her bass playing. That band is a dozen years gone, and yet this is only The Breeders second album. I don't care of the first, but this one seems carefully inspired, as if Deal did not want to release another until The Breeders had "it." It's spare, it's simple, and it's got a lovely, dark texture. Deal's vocals are bold, quirky, and assured. The songs fragment without losing their grooves. This isn't The Pixies, and it isn't trying to be; but it's Kim Deal realizing her post-Pixies potential—and that's saying something.

-whothefuckismel



BLOODROOT  
BLOODROOT  
ECHO ORANGE

Bloodroot, a powerful, grooving trio hailing from Brooklyn has come to take the hard music scene by storm. With a bottom end as low as a snake's belly overlain by some killer fretwork and an overall hard-rock power punch, this outfit has got the riffs, rhythms, and rhymes to take care of all your heavy business. There are a plethora of influences here, from the grungy (Alice in Chains, BADMOTORFINGER-era Soundgarden) to the metallic (Helmet, Life of Agony), all of which help to shape this band into a true rock machine that can both grind it out and display the depth to go the extra mile. A great example is the near seven-minute rocker "Earth Below", which mixes the ethereal nature of The Doors with the heavier nuances of Stone Temple Pilots. Get ready for Bloodroot to overcome your emotions and fill all of your hard-rock needs. [www.bloodroot.net](http://www.bloodroot.net)

-Mike SOS



DAMONE  
FROM THE ATTIC  
RCA RECORDS

I usually don't like bands who have female lead singers, so I started listening to Damone's new CD with little hope. I was already trying to figure out smart-ass comments for why I hated it so bad. A weird thing happened while I was doing this: I started to like the CD. Not only is lead singer a very captivating singer, but she's also barely out of high school. The band's sound switches back and forth between catchy pop/rock and three-chord punk riffs. Add in the female vocals, and you've got yourself a band with a very different sound. If you give Damone a chance, I can almost guarantee you'll be bobbing your head in no time. If a band can get my attention, then it sure as hell can get yours.

-Dane Jackson



TURBONEGRO  
ASS COBRA  
BURNING HEART/EPIPHANY

Doing everything wrong, breaking every rule, and bordering on pure blasphemy seemed to be the business plan for Turbonegro. Originally released in '96 (I believe), Turbonegro set the standard for the obscene with homoerotic content that you really were not sure if it was a gag or some product of a sick and twisted mind (consider songs like "The Midnight NAMBLA", "I Got Erection", and "Sailor Man"). Did I mention that these Scandinavian bastards put the "punk" in punk rock and the "heavy" in heavy metal? Crossing genres at will, they restored the original values to rock: sin, hedonism, sex, drugs, barnyard animals, etc. Did I mention that they make The Dwarves (to which Turbonegro is similar in style) look like some milk and cookies, LEAVE IT TO BEAVER rock band? What more can I say? The awesome power of Turbonegro is something that truly needs to be explored by all, if you like Finch, Blink, and sissy stuff like that, you will hate this. I feel dirty just listening to this (but I keep listening to it, of course), and I am positive George Bush has a copy spinning in the White House somewhere amongst piles of cocaine and Asian porn. Get this now!

-Larry Lugz



FINAL PLAN/MY LUCK  
CLOSED CASKET SECRETS  
THORP

This split CD contains Cleveland's Final Plan and the Texas-based My Luck, and their 10 tracks of aggression are pretty much in tune with one another. Final Plan's four tracks come first, and they waste no time in bringing the pain. With a definite moshable quality to its music, Final Plan pounds out some lightning quick guitar work backed by an arduous rhythm section that slows and speeds like a locomotive. You can almost smell the blood from the pit as the six-string chug of "Regret Me Not" blows out your speakers. My Luck's approach seems to be a bit more jaded and more in line with punk rock, as the six songs it brings

lack the muscle of Final Plan's. My Luck makes up for its lack of East Coast chug by creating a DIY, '77-style explosiveness, keeping the songs short and the music chaotically quick. Take the lament of "Her Eyes Were Crossed at E", a song that clocks in at 1:24 but packs an emotional punch that hits at both the heart and the gut. For a contrast of styles that work well together, check this split CD out. [www.thorprecords.com](http://www.thorprecords.com)

-Mike SOS



SOMETHING TO DO  
NAKED PIGEONS INSIDE!  
TRAPDOOR RECORDS

It's really a shame that ska is no longer the music du jour, because I'm sure there are a lot of great ska bands out there like Something To Do, which is struggling to keep itself afloat. No matter how bad my mood is, I can always pop in a ska album and instantly feel better. I'm not sure if it has something to do with the guitar riffs characteristic of ska or if it's the innocent nature of most ska music. On NAKED PIGEONS INSIDE!, Something To Do offers six ska gems filled with the obligatory up-tempo ska riffs and excellent horn accompaniment. Plus, there's even a small rap lyric in "Farewell WI". How can you go wrong? rap, upbeat songs, and great-sounding ska music... may be in heaven. The only ska band I can think of that Something To Do remotely sounds like is The Parka Kings from Michigan.

-Dane Jackson

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## THE FIRE NEXT TIME SOUND OF A THREAT

The Fire Next Time is a quintet from California whose debut CD is the band's last. Yup, you heard right: the eight tracks that this politically-charged, post-hardcore troupe have displayed for your thirsty ears is the only glimpse of this band that you'll get. That's a bit sad, because The Fire Next Time, a collective seemingly together simply to pass the time, has done more justice to bands like Fugazi, Snapcase, Rage Against the Machine, and Refused than many of the "serious" bands that try and emulate the aforementioned outfits. By harnessing the rebellious spirit of standing up for your beliefs, The Fire Next Time has provided a tumultuous backdrop for its impassioned lyrical content. While those that aren't in tune with "smart" rock may write this off as being a bit too highbrow for a rock 'n' roller's tastes, what can't be denied is the band's powderkeg songwriting. Take the song "Eulogy", a palm-muted riff rocker that, like most of the album, manages to employ punk-rock bravado underneath a coat of alternative rock. If you've got an inkling for being musically enlightened, check out The Fire Next Time for the last time. [www.dimmakrecords.com](http://www.dimmakrecords.com)

-Mike SOS

## COUNT THE STARS NEVER BE TAKEN ALIVE

### VICTORY RECORDS

Count The Stars is a cool four-piece from Albany, New York. The band's sound does not reek of the radio, although they are not so far away from the mainstream that they could not be the jewel of next week's countdown. NEVER BE TAKEN ALIVE, the band's debut disc, is full of explosions; sweet, poppy choruses; and hooky fun.

-H. Barry Zimmerman

## K.

### GOLDFISH

### TIGER STYLE RECORDS

The second solo project by Karla Schikele as her alter ego band, K, is a plodding explosion of m album. She admits the bourbon-fueled album was recorded on an eight-track machine in Woodstock ■ hours of the day and night while she and her friends were baking homemade bread. God knows, it shows. It is m if the spirit of Wavy Gravy rose from a pint of Cherry Garcia ice cream and possessed Schikele. There are circus-type piano pieces here, long pointless meanderings meant to be songs but probably composed while they were passing out...and actually a few ballads that do work out fairly well. I have no problem going back to the days of wine and roses for some decent hippie music, but for God's sake, don't make it sound like Bela Bartok writing pop songs.

-DUG

## SUPERTHRIVE LIVE AT CBGB'S

### SELF-RELEASED CD

CBGB's is known for its world-class sound system, and who better to give the board a test than Tri-State stoner sensations Superthrive. On this particular show from 2002, the 10 tracks are as live and raw as it gets. The guitars buzzsaw through your brain and the beefy rhythms keep the chunky funk pulsating throughout. Give the band credit, as this outfit's Clutch-meets-Kyuss grooves are one of the East Coast's secret weapons: taking a chaotic country twang to a heavy metal beat and making some beautiful music to get hammered by. For those about to rock, check out the live offering that Superthrive has made. You won't be disappointed. [www.superthrive.jc.com](http://www.superthrive.jc.com)

-Mike SOS

## RUNNING LIKE THIEVES SAME TIME NEXT YEAR

### LIVEWIRE

The songs on this EP are like six short sonic booms. With only two songs lasting over two minutes, SAME TIME NEXT YEAR is short, sweet, and to the point. Instead of making the listener sit through filler, the band has refined these six songs and created a worthy hardcore punk album. It also helps that the lead singer's gravelly voice speaks forth truth and reality, so that not only will listeners enjoy the album, they'll also be forced to think about the songs. If fast, up-tempo, heavy punk is your idea of a good time, then Running Like Thieves is right up your alley.

-Dane Jackson

## SUBINCISION

### S/T

### SUBSTANDARD RECORDS

Subincision has a definite Bay Area sound, along the lines of a slower Oppressed Logic or a fast-paced Operation Ivy minus the ska. Pretty good stuff if you're looking to pogo along to something fast and aggressive. Although songs like "Alien Head Babies" and "No Molesta" aren't even near the realm of the serious, they still make for good tunes. Check out Subincision at [www.Substandard.com](http://www.Substandard.com).

-J. Johnson

## CHANNEL3

### DR. STRANGE RECORDS

This 14-song disc is Channel3's first release since the group began playing lots of shows approximately two years ago. One of O.C.'s early punk bands, Channel3 formed in the early '80s and toured relentlessly for many years before its members settled down to family life and day jobs. However, the band members continued to write songs and practice together over the subsequent years, playing the occasional benefit show. The current line-up features two original members, vocalist/guitarist Mike Magrann and guitarist/vocalist Kimm Gardener; drummer Alf Silva (who has been with the band since '93); and new bassist Anthony Thompson, who fits in just fine. The lyrics are generally rather angst-ridden, focusing on lost innocence and failure, (e.g., "Better Days" "The Whine of Youth"). However, lyricist Magrann injects a wry humor into each song, saving them from bathos. He also pokes fun at those who wallow in self-pity in "Just on You". Musically, the band remains true to its punk roots, delivering fast, catchy songs with nice guitar hooks that beg to be heard live. The only song that is a little different is the hidden track, "Gone Drinkin'", a straight-up '80s-style ballad that will have punk fans scratching their heads over its inclusion. Definitely worth buying (and be sure to see these guys live!).

-TEKOLOTE

**EL DOMINO  
DRAMA DAYS  
SELF-RELEASED**

This EP left me wanting more. El Domino may just be the freshest-sounding new band around. The recording is very crisp and matches the quality of the actual music. Most of the music on the disc is three-chord punk, but El Domino makes it interesting by changing tempos and inserting breaks at various times. Lyrically, the disc revolves around life experience—which most people can relate to. If you like Lagwagon, then you'll love El Domino...mainly because the band is a splitting image of Lagwagon.

-Dane Jackson

**COBRA  
BEYOND  
SELF-RELEASED CD**

Holy heavy metal! Queens, NY's Cobra brings us back to the days of epic metal—complete with denim jacket patches and spiked wristbands. With a Mustaine-esque snarl and none of the five tracks clocking in at under six minutes, be prepared for this trio to take you back to a time when people's attention spans were decisively longer and solos superfluous. While Cobra should learn the art of self-editing, this release is definitely a blast from the past, ready to reacquaint you with the Death and Wrathchild America cassette tapes you've got in your storage space.

-Mike SOS

nightmarechildren@devi.com



**THE FENWICKS  
TRUTH & MEMORY  
FLIP-DOG DISCS**

This 17-song live album from America's only afro-Celtic Yiddish ska band is like Oingo Boingo on steroids. The story of this band's formation is legend: Drummer Artimus Pyle of Lynyrd Skynyrd saw the band's video in New York and introduced lead vocalist Steven Schub and guitarist Jimmie Corrieri to a quartet of musicians in Jacksonville, Florida. Eventually, the band added several horn players, until the morphing line-up included as many as 11 musicians. It doesn't hurt that Schub is a vocal twin of Wall of Voodoo's Stan Ridgaway. The frantic live tunes on this album are a great sampling of third-wave ska at its best. This recording was available for free downloads on the band's Website until demand dictated that it had to be released as an album. Though there is a lot of babbling stage talk between some of the songs, most of the banter is funny, if not hilarious. The music more than makes up for any shortcomings from the interludes, as the breakneck pace of the songs forces you to move your feet. Few bands can incorporate a kazoo into their music as effectively as The Fenwicks does, while fewer still can shift seamlessly from circus music to body-shaking ska. This CD is great stuff for any ska fan with a sense of humor. With band members living in New York City, Florida, and Los Angeles, it might be rough to put together a tour. To save on frequent-flier miles, a live CD-release party at Club Lingerie in Los Angeles was recorded by indie director Robert M. Young and will be released as part of a full-length documentary on the band. Check out the band's Website at [www.thefenwicks.com](http://www.thefenwicks.com)

-DUG



**THE USED  
REPRISE**

While a lot of the current attention being paid to the Salt Lake City quartet The Used revolves around lead singer Bert McCracken (a hell of a name for a frontman) and his latest flame, Kelly Osbourne, his band's debut, 12-track release is a curious mix of emo, punk, and hard rock. Armed with lyrics of lamentation and the passage/loss of time and backed by a strong sense of musical dynamics, The Used has given teenagers across the country a new record to play as the soundtrack of their lives. While the album seems to be big fighter-friendly (hey, it does have elements of emo, you know), overall, The Used shows that this band is not a one-trick pony. Catchy choruses and heartfelt lyrics aside, when push comes to shove, The Used, like Thursday and Finch, is the kind of band that appeals to the 14-year-olds, but can rip up a riff rocker like "Maybe Memory" to appeal to the hard-rock masses. [www.theused.net](http://www.theused.net)

-Mike SOS



**DIABOLICAL  
A THOUSAND DEATHS  
MERCENARY**

Sweden's Diabolical returns, as diabolical as ever. This metal troupe's latest nine tracks prove positively that metal is not only alive and well but thriving—especially in Sweden, a virtual metal launching pad. Even though many of the genres bands (this quartet included) draw from the same influences (e.g., Carcass, At the Gates) and basically use many of the same techniques, what they lack in originality they more than make up for in composition and performance. Implementing jaw-dropping guitar work (such as the solo in "Until the Day Arrives") coupled with an understanding that song titles like "Dead Angel's Choir" and "Demonic" need to sound blisternly ominous (which Diabolical is apt at), Diabolical's musicianship is unsurpassed. In the long line of Swedish metal acts, add Diabolical to the list of those that matter. [www.ww3music.com](http://www.ww3music.com)

-Mike SOS



**THE VANDALS  
SWEATIN' TO THE OLDIES: THE VANDALS LIVE  
KUNG FU FILMS**

The Vandals rocks like a laugh riot, and here is more proof (as if we needed it). Kung Fu Films is re-releasing the Jeff Stein (The Who's THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT) 1993 concert film SWEATIN' TO THE OLDIES: THE VANDALS LIVE as a two-disc DVD that is a piece of history for the viewing. For those of you who have never seen this film or are not familiar with The Vandals (what in the hell is wrong with you? The Vandals rules! Get with it!), this is a VERY entertaining how-do-you-do. Guitarist Warren Fitzgerald is a super-freak and an out-of-control exhibitionist and clearly the star of this documentary. The first disc is the movie SWEATIN' TO THE OLDIES: THE VANDALS LIVE, where you can hear such classics as "Anarchy Burger", "Urban Struggle (I Want to Be a Cowboy)", and an actual interview with the legendary oddity Pat Brown. Also included is a new commentary track. On this track the members of The Vandals eat pizza and talk shit about themselves and the crowd, filling us in on the cool little stories associated with that time period and the making of the video. The second disc is full of cool extras, including more live action, interviews, and big-time screwball comedy with The Vandals. I enjoyed this DVD so much that I couldn't stop watching it and talking about it with my friends. The Vandals is a great, great band, and here is yet one more good excuse to obsess. Rock on.

-H. Barry Zimmerman

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**New Jersey Punk Rock !!**



THE DREAM IS DEAD  
LETTER OF RESIGNATION  
WHAT ELSE  
The Dream Is Dead, a seething hardcore outfit that hails from Indiana, flexes its muscle on these five tracks. Fast, heavy, loud, and (above all) angry, The Dream Is Dead doesn't appear to be the happiest troop of campers, as the band incorporates bitter choral screams that sound as if a charging, torch-wielding chain gang is about to attack. When whisked into its socially-conscious barrage, you'll find a lot of what makes hardcore tick today in TDID's mix, which is tinged with old-school punk rock (just check out the vocal styling in "Consume. Consent. Concede.") and see if you're not reminded of old-school Henry Rollins). For an extra bonus, check out the kick-ass Poison Idea cover that properly ends this explosive release. [www.whatelse-cards.com](http://www.whatelse-cards.com)

-Mike SOS



SPIV  
DON'TCHA KNOW  
POP SWEATSHOP  
The third full-length release from Elvis wanna-be Chris Barber is a tour de force of pop rock at its best, with a stunning variety of melodies and well-written tunes. Ken Stringfellow (who worked with The Posies and played with R.E.M.) plays various instruments and produced the album. The musical similarities to this album are all over the place, with sounds similar to both The Stranglers and The Cars. Perhaps the most accurate comparison would be that of one of the better tunes on the CD, "Songs to Sway To", and Bob Dylan's masterpiece, "Wedding Song" (from the PLANET WAVES album). Don't worry, Chris, even though it is a note-for-note rip-off, you're too young to know the Dylan song-and Dylan is too old to read SKRATCH. All plagiarism aside, this is a solid rock album that shows tons of promise by a truly talented performer.

-DUG



V/A  
A PUNK TRIBUTE TO WEEZER  
CLEOPATRA RECORDS  
Having enjoyed both of the BEFORE YOU WERE PUNK discs (which took melodic '80s new wave hits and set them to speedy punk beats), I was excited to hear Weezer's catchy tunes played faster and harder by punks. (Yes, I DO tend to think faster is better!) However, in that respect this CD proved to be disappointing, because most of the bands included sound as if they are earnestly doing their best to replicate the songs just as Weezer recorded them. For example, The Angry Samoans-a band I appreciate for its wacky lyrics and raw, garage sound-turn in a cover of "Buddy Holly" that is so close to the original's precise, polished pop rock that it's scary. The only bands that torque the songs are Flipper, which does a slightly heavier version of "Hash Pipe"; The Monkey Pirates, which roughs up "Island in the Sun"; and Dr. Know, which does a self-consciously dramatic, gothy version of "Undone (the Sweater Song)" that made me laugh really hard. I guess one could make the point that Weezer's songs are too well-crafted to be trifled with-but if so, then what's the point of creating this disc? I have to add one thing: the D.I. cover of "Say It Ain't So" is surprisingly weak; it sounds like vocalist Casey Royer is straining to hit each and every note. Should you buy this disc? For me, the Dr. Know number makes the CD worth its price...but I don't know if everyone would feel that way, so I recommend this to diehard Weezer fans rather than diehard punk fans.

-TEKOLOTE



THE HEROINE SHEIKS  
RAPE ON THE INSTALLMENT PLAN  
REPTILIAN  
The Heroine Sheiks has a very impressive background, as this NYC-based avant-garde punk outfit boasts members of The Cows, Lydia Lunch, and Foetus in its ranks. With all this diversity in the mix, you can only imagine the sonic output. To be sure, the 10 tracks on THS's debut do not disappoint. With an electronic vibe, a booming rhythm section (the backbone of any good band, by the way), and an unforced sense for punk-rock debauchery, this band-much like The Jesus Lizard, Sonic Youth, Faith No More, and Soul Coughing-pushes the envelope of musical expression, coming up with some weird and wild stuff, seemingly by making observational accounts of everyday underground occurrences (like a cocaine deal gone awry in "Effity Eff" or a wayward female's profile in "Nuclear Jeannie"). While the sounds provided by this eclectic outfit can be described as "neo noise rock," there are elements of '90s grunge, some '60s super-spy thematic piano rock, and an artistic aura that puts THS over the top of any pre-packaged major-label production. The genuine nature of the music shines through the lo-fi recording, putting THS at the forefront of the NYC art-rock underground. [www.reptilianrecords.com](http://www.reptilianrecords.com)

-Mike SOS



ROCK CITY MORGUE  
SOME GHOULS  
NO LABEL  
Sean Yseult of White Zombie is back with some old friends to rock the graveyard some more. They definitely sound like their stated influences, with the whole Kiss/New York Dolls/Aerosmith thing, especially when they get the piano rocking on "Cut You Loose". It's not the greatest show on Earth, but it's pretty cool (and they do a cool cover of "Shattered" by The Rolling Stones). The album's also produced by Daniel Rey (the Ramones, Misfits), which means the sound is pretty tight.

-Snotty Scotty



NO TREND  
TRITONIAN NASH-VEGAS POLYESTER COMPLEX  
TOUCH AND GO  
Witnessing the splendor that is No Trend back in 1983 at some dive bar in Albuquerque, NM, I was amazed. The show was basically a hardcore show (at least for that time period), and No Trend looked the part; but its music was definitely not of the mold. No Trend was a mish-mash of '70s punk, art damage, and no-form jazz. This release (originally from '87) stays true to what I originally saw, with one exception: a kick-ass horn section. Now keep in mind, this is well before the days of ska-core (or whatever silly name they call bands with a horn section). "Copperhead" and "Space Disco" really bring out the eclectic personality that is No Trend. You really can't put this band in a category. It was a punk band by the original definition: no rules, no limit, no future-just spur of the moment inspiration fueled by ego, aggression, angst, and the desire of popular culture. In many ways, No Trend is similar to SoCal's own Nip Drivers-yet miles apart at the same time. Pick this up and experience what punk was like before your generation assigned rules to the whole thing. For you old timers like myself, this should bring back memories of the days when being different really meant being different.

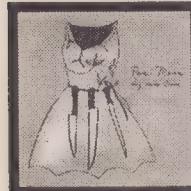
-Larry Lugz



LUCID NATION  
TACOMA BALLET  
BRAIN FLOSS

**BRAIN FLESS**  
Lucid Nation is an ambitious troupe that hails from the Pacific Northwest (Tacoma, WA, to be exact) whose latest release is a work to be marveled at-a 32-track rock opera of sorts. As described by the project's brainchild Tamra Spivey, this gritty Jack Endino production is a story of a girl who discovers a "terrible secret about her town, her lover, and herself." How heavy is that? Do we hear Lifetime Television moving in on this one? Spivey, a Courtney Love meets Chrissy Hynde, is the narrator of this fantastic voyage, and her insights (as well as her scruffy vocals and Ronette-on-cocaine delivery) make TACOMA BALLET an intriguing two-hour listening experience. Not a band as much as it is an ensemble, Lucid Nation's hybridization of garage rock, grunge, psychedelic jamming, and lush ambience is akin to watching a kaleidoscope; always changing shape and form but consistent with colors. The colors which Lucid Nation chooses are earthy and a bit dark, sometimes almost recreating pain through art, such as in the Doors-*y* trip of "Welcome to America." Constructively destructive and jarring to the senses, by unlocking some of Spivey's demons for all the world to hear Lucid Nation has opened a proverbial Pandora's Box of musicality, challenging to both the audience and its performers. Get real comfortable and be prepared to be uncomfortable when popping in Lucid Nation's latest, [www.lucidnation.com](http://www.lucidnation.com)

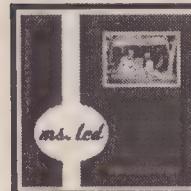
-Mike SOS



RAINER MARIA  
LONG KNIVES DRAWN  
POLYVINYL RECORD CO.

*Rain Maria* by Rain Maria  
  
Pretentious bands start in poetry workshops. Usually they spout vague European sensibilities while strumming a guitar, then shuffle around the coffee bar in black sweatshirts and berets. I truly disliked Rainier Maria's first album, found myself humming along to my wife's copy of its second album, and now have to go on record to say that its third album has finally eclipsed the romantic ambition with musical talent. The band now seems to have a knack for loading its songs with hooks-pretentious though they may be-and getting them to work. The opening track on the new CD, "Mystery and Misery," is probably one of the band's best and most hook-laden tunes to date. When De Marrais warbles "You're wicked, you're oh so wicked," it is truly one of the great moments of rock. Not all the songs on the CD work as well as the first tune, with many of their repetitive stabs at catchy lyrics falling flat. The tune "The Awful Truth of Loving" is another of the gems on this disc, with a haunting melody backed by a somnorous theremin. If you liked Rainier Maria's earlier discs, you'll love this one; but if, like me, you thought the early stuff sucked, you will be pleasantly surprised at the progress the band has made. It's not a perfect album-actually, not even a great album...but it does show some great promise. Other than that, the band does look pretty cool in the black sweatshirts and berets.

-DUG



MS. LED  
AFTERNOON IN CENTRAL PARK  
FISH THE CAT PRODUCTIONS

**MS. LED**

Just when I bemoan the sad lack of female-fronted bands in today's music scene, along comes a tough, hard-edged Seattle band with an angry Leslie Wood behind the mic. With a sound like a cranked up Foo Fighters in a progesterone fit, this Northeastern quartet has been garnering raves for its high-energy live shows. The music transfers well from stage to disc, as the band deftly switches from Clash-type anthems to slow, almost Bob Seeger-ish ballads. For those who would like a crunchier version of The Breeders, Ms. Led is just what you've been waiting for. This is ballyhoo rock from one of the hardest rocking girl bands around. Check out the band's Website at [www.lesliwood.com](http://www.lesliwood.com).

• DUTCH



WHAT WISHES CAN'T MEND  
THE INSOMNIAC DIARIES  
GOODFELLOW

**GOODFELLOW**  
That chaotic hardcore sound that seems to be prevalent in the underground rock scene these days has spread to Florida, as the Sunshine State quintet known as What Wishes Can't Mend's latest release is as noisy and disjointed as anything that's currently on the circuit. Having as much in common with the current wave of American hardcore as it does death metal (and all of its multiple sub-genres), WWCM brings out all of the heavy artillery to create a screamcore piece that uses searing guitar lines and tons of staccato grooves to change the mood and make your body contort in all kind of crazy positions in the pit. And while song titles like "Love Brings Out the Best in Me" should be reserved for a Barry Manilow greatest-hits CD, rest assured that What Wishes Can't Mend makes a song like that sound like a bloody mess.

Mike SOS



TOM HEDRICK  
AS IF  
FREEBOM 25 C

FREEDOM OF SPEECH RECORDS  
The debut solo album by the former

radios drives the listener to distraction, there are some great moments here, such as the classic ode to our 11th president, "James K. Polk", and the bizarre "My Hand Has A Mind of Its Own". Buy this CD if you want to own the weirdest thing on your block (but don't expect to be rocking out to any of this).

-BUG



**HAILE UNLIKELY**  
LONG ISLAND'S REGGAE AMBASSADORS  
**SEI F-REF FASED**

**SELF-RELEASED**  
It's hard to find good reggae lately from people not related to the Marley clan in some way. Named after the Rasta god, Haili Unlikely seems like a highly unlikely pairing. When I think of Long Island, I don't think of reggae, but because of the talent of Haili Unlikely, I've been forced to change my mind. The band's music is rich with texture, from the keyboards to the male/female vocals, Haili Unlikely has it all when it comes to reggae music. Not only do you get some great reggae music displaying the irie lifestyle on this self-released disc, but you also get to hear the band's stellar working of dub versions of its songs. Besides a fresh reggae sound, the songs on this disc also offer inspiration, visions of fun, and hope. This CD is for fans of reggae, dub reggae, Peter Tosh, and older Bob Marley music.

-Dane Jackson

The image is a black and white advertisement for Neurot Recordings. It features several album covers and promotional text. At the top left is a circular logo with a stylized sun or flower design. To the right of the logo, the word "NEUROT" is written in large, bold, serif capital letters, with "RECORDINGS" in a slightly smaller font below it. Below the logo, there are three separate sections, each containing an album cover thumbnail and descriptive text. The first section shows a dark album cover with a small white square in the center. The text reads: "BEE AND FLOWER  
'What's Mine Is Yours'" followed by a paragraph about the band. The second section shows a dark album cover with a small white square in the center. The text reads: "AMBER ASYLUM  
'Frozen In Amber'" followed by a paragraph about the debut album. The third section shows a dark album cover with a small white square in the center. The text reads: "CULLER RING  
'355'" followed by a paragraph about the band and their tour. At the bottom left, the words "OUT NOW" are printed in a bold, sans-serif font. Below this, there are three more album covers with their titles: "STEVE VON TILL  
'If I Should Fall To The Field'", "LAVA EATERZ  
'Mind Control For Infants'", and "TARANTULA HAWK  
'Self-titled'". On the right side, there is a "complete catalog online" link, a "www.neurot.com" link, and a "or send check or money order  
made out to Neurot Recordings" note. At the very bottom right is a small logo for "NR" inside a circle, with "NEUROT RECORDINGS" written in a bold, sans-serif font below it.

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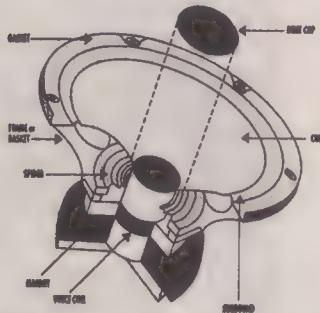
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## EVERAFTER FADING INTO BRIGHT

Tribunal Records. Serendipity. After looking at the album cover, then seeing the band and album name, I was prepared to hate this CD before I had spun it even once. I put it in, pushed play, and braced myself the way you do if you know that a fire alarm is about to go off near your ear. What a surprise! This album is truly amazing. FADING INTO BRIGHT contains 14 well-written, catchy, melodic punk songs with beautiful female lead vocals. Lyrically, I found it interesting to read about relationships that were written from a female point of view. Musically, it is catchy as all hell, with very tasteful guitar work, intricate but not excessive. I hope this band stays together for a while. If so, I expect great things.

-Joey Housewrecker



## TAPROOT WELCOME

Atlantic. The sophomore effort from Michigan-based Fred Durst-haters Taproot proves a few things. The first is that this metal pack is quite possibly one of the few in its genre that has legs, thanks in part to vocalist Stephen Richards's vast vocabulary, pensive lyrics, and overall lush deliveries. Just check out the ruthless aggression of "Myself" and the rollicking vocals of "Sumtimes" for examples. The second is that Taproot is ready to run with the ball, aptly shown by each of the 12 tracks on WELCOME, all of which are both well-composed and radio-friendly-no small feat, judging by the emptiness of today's airwaves. While a lot of the sizzle and epic dynamics that made GIFT a premiere debut have been stripped away for decisively tighter, crisper songwriting, the end result is an album that can conquer both a moshpit and the tepid waters of rock radio. Introspective and edgy yet surprisingly catchy, Taproot may have found a way to beat Korn, Disturbed, and the Bizkit at their own games by merely reaching down deep and bearing its musical soul. [www.taprootmusic.com](http://www.taprootmusic.com)

-Mike SOS



## ANGEL CITY OUTCASTS 2,000 PINTS AND GOING STRONG! SELF-RELEASED

Very rarely does a band catch my attention at the first listen, but ACO managed to grab me at the album's first song ("Lockdown"). In fact, throughout this five-song little gem, ACO keeps you hooked, hungry, and longing for more. Stylistically, this crew of street-tough yobs churns out huge helpings of U.S. streetpunk, English oil, backwoods blues, and riff happy rawk 'n' roll. In short, over-the-top non-stop musical mayhem. The band's influences run a gamut including Social Distortion, AC/DC, Menace, Hudson Falcons, and Guns N' Roses—but without ever sounding like any of them. The music is tight, fast, and hard-hitting, with enough sing-along, gruff vocal melodies to have every patron in the neighborhood tavern singing at the top of his or her lungs. The music is stripped down, but there is enough added rifflage to satisfy even the most discerning guitar virtuoso out there. Alex B manages to take the vocals to the next level with a style that is similar to Mark Dacey (of Brass Knuckle Boys) and the late Bon Scott—and just a hint of Mike Ness sincerity to keep us melodically rooted. I'm anxious to see where ACO's next release will take it. If the band is taking passengers, then consider going along for the ride. I plan on it.

-Larry Lugz



## THE PRIMETIME HEROES NOISOME RECORDS

The Primetime Heroes is another of the million bands on the Blink 182 clone bone. On one hand, you could say that this Kansas quartet is doing "the modern punk thing"; on the other hand, you could say that The Primetime Heroes sounds exactly like an eternal list of bands working their way towards the MTV palace of fun. Either way, I am bored to tears with this guileless attack, which is becoming the social disease of mediocrity, swallowed in the industry of cool that used to be a proud wild bird called rock 'n' roll. Blink 182, you rock, but all the mini-Blinksters need to shut down the reproduction factory, kill the assembly-line rock, and squat in the dirt of the fertile mind and squeeze out an original idea. If rock is God (and it is), this poseur shit is the devil. Fuck the devil.

H. Barry Zimmerman



## DAG NASTY MINORITY OF ONE REVELATION

Dag Nasty has been around seemingly forever—despite this being the band's first full-length release in a decade. Influencing as many young buck punks as Bad Religion (guitarist Brian Baker's other project) or Black Flag have, Dag Nasty's mark is indelible. And while the members of Dag Nasty have gone on to other projects and musical endeavors, some more high profile than others (Ai, Down By Law, and Bad Religion), the anachronistic nature and downright integrity of the 11 tracks on MINORITY OF ONE shows that the band has remained true to itself. Still fist-pumping yet righteously seasoned, when you get veterans of this caliber together, expect a hard-rocking, ass-kicking release by a band that knows its limitations and strengths. Thankfully, Dag Nasty knows the power of timing, as MINORITY OF ONE arrives with the ability to show the new jacks a thing or two about rebellion, religion, and politics—all in the guise of true punk-rock pretense. Welcome back one of the forefathers of your scene, boys and girls. [www.daghousenyc.com](http://www.daghousenyc.com)

-Mike SOS



## LOST CITY ANGELS S/T NITRO RECORDS

Well, damn, this is a lot better of a record than I was expecting. Lost City Angels plays a sweet blend of punk rock straight out of Boston, MA (where half of your favorite bands are from). Although probably not the most unique brand of music, I would like to say LCA sounds like the East Coast's version of The Swingin' Utters. However you take that, LCA manages to swirl in a whole lot of pop sense, making this total ear candy for anyone who isn't averse to either straight pop or completely hardcore punk. Having toured with such awesome bands as Social Distortion, The Mighty Mighty Bosstones and The Living End, these guys are clearly not messing around. Tracks like "First Things First" and "Lost and Gone" are surely praiseworthy. Good hooks and solid back-up vocals make this CD one of Nitro's best releases to date.

-J. Johnson

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## DEMONICS

RITUAL ON THE BEACH  
COLDFRONT RECORDS

The Demonic's equal parts The Ramones, The Ventures, The Queers, and Slayer. Imagine purely evil, satanic music set to the backdrop of the Southern California coastline. (Antoine LeVey's Church of Satan does own a rather nice size portion of Newport and Costa Mesa, after all.) Heavy surf riffage, chunky power-chord action, satanic imagery, Hawaiian shirts, hula girls, shrunken heads, piles of blood, and some mighty fine sing-along choruses. Although the lyrical content is pure '50s-era B-movie shlock, it's happy music for the macabre at heart (not in a Cramps kind of way, more like a happy Misfits), 12 songs, and not a bad one in the bunch. Eclectic and hysterical. Should you buy it? That is a definite "10-4," good buddy. I can't get enough of this strange yet familiar surf-death-pop-punk masterpiece.

-Larry Lugz

## BONA ROBA

THIS IS YOUR BRAIN  
SELF-RELEASED

The four guys that comprise NYC's Bona Roba seem to be very much in tune with the gritty rock 'n' roll of the '70s. Maybe that's why the outfit's three-song release has such a kick to it. While many of the bands today try to emulate the dirtbag culture that The Strokes and all of those "The" bands have revived, it seems that guys in Bona Roba wore Kiss T-shirts before it was cool, had straggly hair all throughout high school, and were not on the football team. Just check out the first track, "In the Cut", for proof. Think coke-era Stones, Mott the Hoople, and even a tinge of The Ramones, and you've got Bona Roba, a band that doesn't primp and pose—but has the right to do so. [www.bonaroba.net](http://www.bonaroba.net)

-Mike SOS

## THE KICKS

THE KICKS  
XS RECORDS

The debut full-length release from this Little Rock-based quartet is a throwback to all the great late '70s early '80s pseudo-punk pop bands like The Ramones and 20/20. With a sound that rises far above the slew of neo-rock garage bands flooding the market today, The Kicks has toured with The Donnas and The Juliana Theory—a perfect mix. The 11 songs on this disc are reminiscent of Weezer, with catchy choruses and simple guitar melodies. You won't see much moshing at this band's shows, but you will hear some great tunes that most people will sit through. Check the band out at its record label's Website, [www.xsrecords.com](http://www.xsrecords.com).

-DUG

## THE DISASTER

BLACK, WHITE AND RED ALL OVER  
ALONE

The Disaster, a Rochester, NY, quartet that, despite having very long song titles (that sometimes take as long to say as the actual track), puts pure hardcore punk aggression into its mix. This band is fast and loud, with the proper amount of scathing lyrics and honest anger that we don't hear enough of in today's sanitized scene. The 11 tracks that The Disaster brings to the masses are a seething middle-class viewpoint of life, love, and all of the lamentations that follow. With enough influence from Black Flag, Minor Threat, Gorilla Biscuits, and all of the bands that made the underground scene volatile, The Disaster joins good company by pouring out all of the frustrations of today's youth in a creatively constructive way. Just watch your back when you see the band live, as there's bound to be bodies flying everywhere. For a shot of real deal, heart-and-soul hardcore, look no further than this rising outfit. [www.thedisasterhatesyou.com](http://www.thedisasterhatesyou.com)

-Mike SOS

## DIRT BIKE ANNIE & THE POPSTERS

THE ELLIS ISLAND RENDEZVOUS  
STARDUMB RECORDS

Dirt Bike Annie hails from New York; The Popsters hails from Palermo, Italy. Both bands play their own versions of what they think pop-punk should sound like. DBA plays a style that is in the vein of Red 5—know, female-fronted (though not on all songs) pop-rock punky fun. Yes, the songs are predictable, but the girl can sing, the drummer is flawless (both speedy and quirky, depending on the song), and the guitars buzz through song after song, all of which ends up forcing you to hum, stomp your feet, and just enjoy it all at a pure musical level. The Popsters plays to the ear. Some songs even bring to mind the skate-punk style of Wallride (only with male vocals). Well-rounded and ready to rock, The Popsters plays pop for a punk populace. I'm not really a pop-punk fan, but this one kept me humming-proof that the songs are memorable and worthy of a spin. Seek, pick it out, and enjoy!

-Larry Lugz

## DEAD SERIOUS

IT'S WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE  
THORP

Hardcore outfit Dead Serious takes 11 tracks of attitude and burns it straight into your brain on IT'S WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE. This Virginia quintet take snippets of Shutdown, Murphy's Law, Blood for Blood, and countless other hardcore luminaries and creates a ripping account of the art of getting over quick and making a break for it. The perfect criminals? Songs like "I Break Hearts and Heads" and "Do Unto Others and Split" are pretty indicative that the members of Dead Serious want to be the outlaws in the big old underground music frontier. And who's to say that this band can't carry it out? If the blunt lyrical content and face-stomping choruses displayed in "Yeah, My Pussy Hurts Too" and "Here's a Quarter" keep churning out, there's no telling what this band can do. [www.thorprecords.com](http://www.thorprecords.com)

-Mike SOS

## REBURN & THE SKIDMARKS

TIRED OF THE SAME OL' FUCK?  
CD-R

These guys sound like the middle ground between NOFX and Sublime, with a particular emphasis on all that is raunchy and nasty in the world. The only problem is that they play too slowly for this sort of thing to sound good. Of course, with lyrics like "I love whores crammed like smores" and "Your loose, cum-filled rectum I do adore," I think it kind of works, anyway.

-Snotty Scotty



**HALF VISCONTE  
WAS IT FEAR**  
**SUNSET ALLIANCE RECORDS**

Though this full-length release has all the trappings of a great indie album (such as dark, forbidding artwork; a quartet of eclectic musicians spread across the U.S.; cool song titles; and "nervous intensity"), it never rises above what the band labels "an amalgam of studio experimentation." The promo suggests that what we hear "is the volatile combination of each member's disparate compulsions." What we do hear on this album is four guys noodling around for three days in a studio. Once in a while they stumble across a melody and play it for a while; other times they just jam senselessly. Some musicians might like this record for the few creative moments that seem to work, but those moments are so few and far between that this album ends up sounding like an incomprehensible late-night jam in a music store. The funny thing about experiments is that some are successful and some fail. If this band expects to sell its product, it better go back into the lab and work on the formula.

-DUG



**CONTENDER  
AWAYWITHWORDS**  
**NEGATIVE PROGRESSION**

Don't judge Contender's piano intro as a gauge of this 11-track offering, as that's about as light as the disc gets. This Colorado quartet has taken heed of the current wave of bands that mix a potpourri of influences into the rock 'n' roll crock pot, and Contender's concoction is as potent as any of the emo darlings on the scene today. Jaded guitar work and unbridled screeches and yowls meld into pop-punk melodies and back again into a jarring scream-a-thon in many of the tracks such as "At a Glance", whose chorus includes a nice riff suitable for turning a dance floor upside-down. Even though there's a definite saturation of band's like this on the underground landscape, Contender seems to be speaking directly to the new crop of kids who believe what they read in zines as much as those damn '80s John Hughes heartstring-plucking movies. Plus, the band's songs usually end really uniquely, like the fade out in "I Have the Conch", which ends the record but keeps going in your head for a little while longer. A bit too emo for those about to rock, but when Contender releases the hounds, it's clattering time. [www.negativeprogressionrecords.com](http://www.negativeprogressionrecords.com)

-Mike SOS



**WAITING FOR AUTUMN  
NOW I KNOW FOREVER**  
**AMERICAN JEALOUSLY RECORDS**

The debut album from this San Diego quintet is a taut, angst-ridden foray into emo rock. Explosive guitars, stellar vocals, and a powerful rhythm section make this CD a release to remember. The band has an uncanny ability to switch seamlessly from blistering rock to slow, melancholy melodies in the same songs. Don't confuse this band with your typical emo outfit: the songs cover the rock spectrum with Tool-like intensity; Rage Against the Machine conviction; and dark, almost gloom-rock slow pieces. This is an amazing first album. Don't let the fact that the members are all Christians scare you off. Though a few churches

might ask these guys to play, I think they're more than a tad too harsh for most youth pastors. Instead, look for them on the next Warped Tour next to MxPx.

-DUG



**Glassjaw  
WORSHIP AND TRIBUTE**  
**WARNER BROTHERS**

Long Island natives Glassjaw return with the band's sophomore effort, an 11-track collection that finds the quintet a bit calmer and much more refined than on *EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SILENCE*. While *WORSHIP AND TRIBUTE* may mark a kinder, gentler Glassjaw, fans of the organized chaos will be ecstatic that the group's arsenal still contains dissonant guitars duking it out for your undivided attention and Daryl Palumbo's splendidly spasmodic vocalizations. Lyrically, Glassjaw seems to be in a more serene place, with Palumbo shedding another layer of his Mike Patton routine and revealing a bit more of himself through song. Musically, the band seems as light as a Britney Spears stage costume, as the rhythm section does all of the odd-time dirty work underneath layers of guitars and, well, Daryl. Highlights include the shot of adrenaline called "Radio Cambodia" and the Meatloaf-on-crack faux sports call on "The Gillette Cavalcade of Sports". The album showcases a band that has been through the mill. >From label wars, personal sickness, and all the goodness of the music industry, Glassjaw convincingly shows that it can still create enthralling music that simultaneously touches the soul and pounds the eardrums. [www.glassjaw.com](http://www.glassjaw.com)

-Mike SOS



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There seems to be no end to the original punk bands that Tooth and Nail Records has on its roster. The latest shocker is Element 101, a spacey, progressive rock version of a modern-day Jefferson Airplane. There are some eerie moments on this disc in which vocalist Crissie Verhagen is belting tunes out like a late '70s or early '80s rock diva. Once again, a Tooth and Nail band proves that Christian musicians can do more than sing Kum By Yah or dress in tired, old fashions and play garage music. The 10 songs on this disc are alternately catchy pop, grinding rock, strange background noises that will make you check your phone or car alarm, and melodic, emotionally charged ballads. Perhaps the only real criticism of this album is the unfathomably indecipherable font used on the CD cover. After using a magnifying glass, a high-powered lamp, a Rubix cube, and a scale model of the Rosetta Stone, I think I was able to make out the name of the group and album. It's fine recording—but don't read the liner notes unless you've got a pocket full of Advil.

-DUG



**NAKATOMI PLAZA  
PRIVATE PROPERTY**  
**IMMIGRANT SUN RECORDS**

I have no idea where to place Nakatomi Plaza. Is it punk? Is it indie/emo? Is it hardcore? After listening to *PRIVATE PROPERTY* a few times, I think it's safe to say that the band's music is a fusion of all three genres. While the band leans more towards loud, distorted, heavy indie rock, it also shows it can hold its own with other music genres. One of the best examples on the disc where Nakatomi Plaza show its diversity the most is "for me to live happily, you must die". Besides being great musically, the lyrics on *PRIVATE PROPERTY* are mainly driven by politics and social injustice. With these 10 tracks, Nakatomi Plaza hopes to communicate with others to create understanding. I think the band does a great job at that. Yippe ka ay, motherfucker!

-Dane Jackson



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# TAMPA

## JAM 2003

by Louie Baur-[sk8shop.com]





First of all I would like to start off by thanking the people that helped make this trip possible for me. I tagged along with Dennis and Devon Lamb for the last 5 days. We started off at LAX and flew to Orlando where the Billabong bus picked us up and then we were off to the Hilton in Ybor City where Ryan Dewitt from Element had a room for us. Mark Scurto from Oakley also had a few people there so when dinner time came it was usually people from Element, Oakley and Billabong and the table was 20+ people big. Ybor City is a trip and we were right in the middle of it. Bars, and other forms of entertainment everywhere!! We went out every night and there was a Gameworks right around the corner from us which was perfect for our crowd as it had games for the kids, a few bars and some decent food. Anyway thanks team managers that was cool too hook it up for me, Scurto

from Oakley, Dewitt from Element and Andrew from Billabong. I ripped off some of the text from Rob Meronek below so you can get an idea of what went down over the past 5 days and if you get a chance to make it out to a contest in Tampa it will be worth your while. The whole staff will be there first thing in the morning and the last ones to close down the bar, the perfect example of work hard/party hard not the typical party hard and show up around 4pm the next day. Thanks Rob, Ryan and Brian from SPOT you guys kick ass!!!! Thursday, January 16, 2003 Already at 11am, the park was pretty packed. Corey Duffel is out for his last contest as an AM. Greg Myers is also out there killing the new course along with a bunch of other little kid rippers like Collin Provost and Ryan Sheckler - they're everywhere.



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Looks like Jamie Thomas is hanging out for the weekend. Dan Murphy just got put on Circa flow and Zero flow I guess from Jamie scopin' his moves. Aaron Perko unfortunately broke his elbow to pieces attempting a kickflip tail slide on the big rail. It was bent completely unnatural and it even freaked out our resident paramedic. I later found out that it's some kind of a fracture and a dislocation so hopefully it's not that bad. Looks like Chase Erlich is also on the injury list now, too. There's a lot of nice young ladies hanging out here. I'm sure they'll all be out at Masquerade tonight also - yeah hoo. Look for photos tomorrow if I don't loose the camera again. Possibly interesting geek statistic: I'm doing the heat sheets now and updating the skater database. Out of 239 people registered right now, 146 did not skate Tampa Am last year - the rest did. That's over 60% new faces.



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**Friday, January 17, 2003**

Right before the results were being read, Billy Marks and some other guy I don't know yet were impressing the crowd and ended up collecting some money from the crowd for the stunts they pulled. Billy Marks 360 flip lip-slid the rail for about \$70. Right after that he kickflip lip-slid it first try. The other guy didn't make a kickflip back lip because his board broke but he still ended up collecting some loot from the crowd. I was one of the last few at the bar shutting Masquerade down and now I'm the first one at the park in the morning at 7:30am - yikes - it's going to be a rough day on Saturday. I think I'm still intoxicated, I didn't go home last night, I'm rocking the same gear I wore yesterday, had no toothbrush at the hotel I crashed at, and I got about two hours of sleep. Last night was a pretty damn good time to sum it up. Check the photos for the best story. We sported Salvation Army suits, rode in a limo, rocked out, and got right back to work the next morning.





### Saturday, January 18, 2003

We do the heat sheets and divide up the days in random order. This year a lot of serious rippers randomly got thrown into Saturday. It was very close as far as the scores go down at the 16th place where the cut is. The spread between 15th place and 20th place was only a single point. Nick Matlin barely squeezed in after having a tie score with Craig Williams where the second run has to be used as the tie breaker. That just shows you should never blow off your second run if you ripped it in your first. All through the contest, we do a "results so far" listing for the judges so they can get a feel for how the whole day is going as far as what's going to be a qualifying score, etc. After the second heat, a ten year old kid was in the first qualifying spot.

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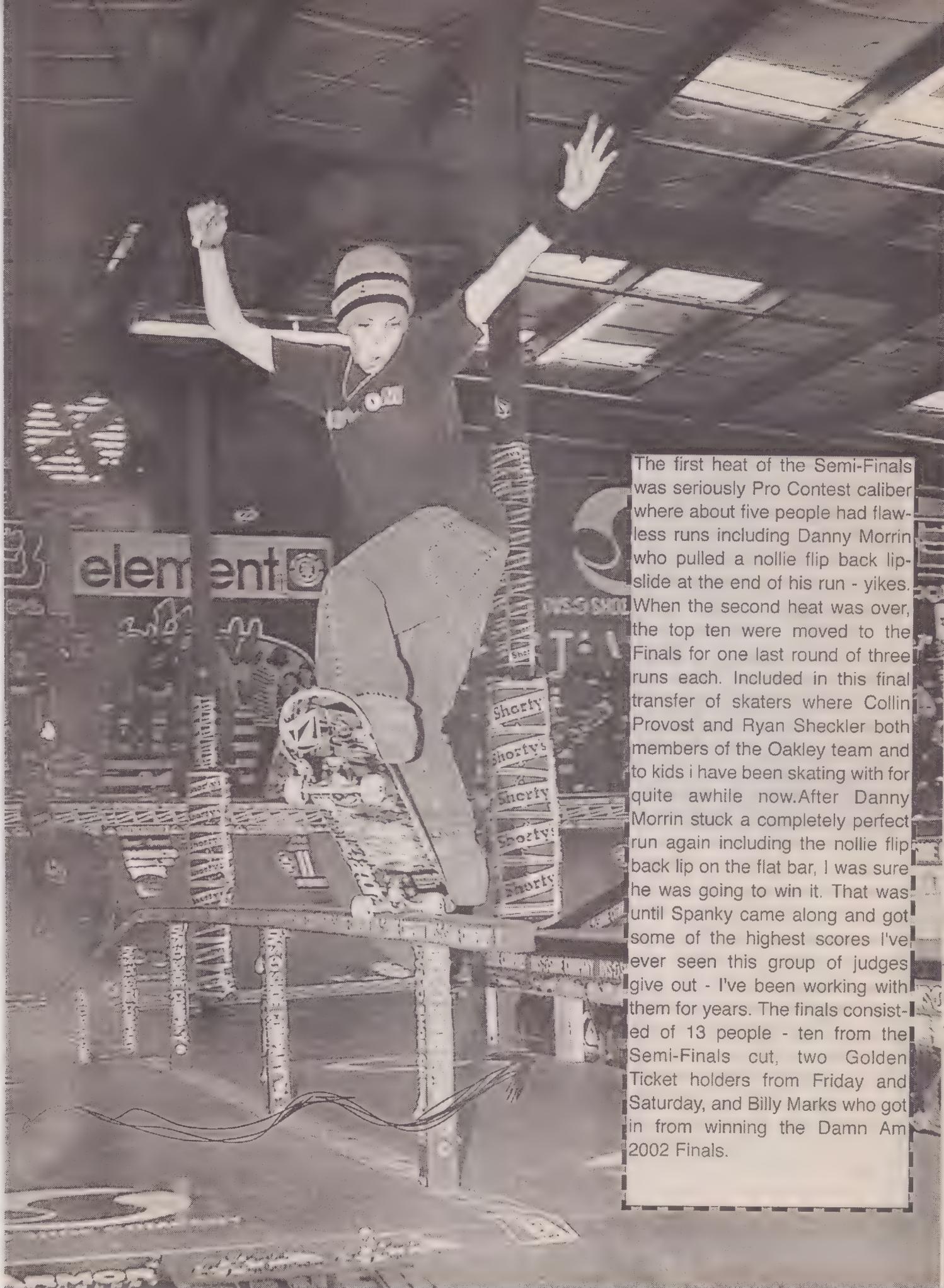


I had to double check my scores and also talk to the judges to make sure I wasn't asleep when I entered the scores or LKP's came into play or something. Turns out Evan Mirchell truly ripped with tricks like kickflip back lips during his run. Danny Cerezini later did a switch kickflip 50-50 and KFBSTS during his run which ended up bumping Evan out of the Golden Ticket spot. Somewhere around 6pm at night the vert contest started up. It was in the 40's for sure and the contest was cold as shit!!! Devon Lamb stuck his run but ended up in 21st place ahead of an additional 7 people so that was pretty cool. It was so cold out there you could see him standing on the vert ramp shivering along with the rest of the riders now that I think of it. Collin Provost was in the

same boat, landed his shit and ended up in 13th place but didn't make it to the finals. Since Collin skated so well in the street contest and was in the prelims for that the next day I don't think he was too bummed out. It was so cold here that people were watching from inside their cars with the heat on and honking their horns instead of hooting and hollering.

#### Sunday, January 19, 2003

Sunday morning started with the First Annual Old Man Bowl Jam where any and all washed up pros, "has-been's", and "never-was" dudes were encouraged to get in on the mayhem. I hung out there for about half an hour to take some photos before going back to the street course to see Semi-Finals skaters killing the new course in practice.



The first heat of the Semi-Finals was seriously Pro Contest caliber where about five people had flawless runs including Danny Morrin who pulled a nollie flip back lip-slide at the end of his run - yikes. When the second heat was over, the top ten were moved to the Finals for one last round of three runs each. Included in this final transfer of skaters were Collin Provost and Ryan Sheckler both members of the Oakley team and to kids I have been skating with for quite awhile now. After Danny Morrin stuck a completely perfect run again including the nollie flip back lip on the flat bar, I was sure he was going to win it. That was until Spanky came along and got some of the highest scores I've ever seen this group of judges give out - I've been working with them for years. The finals consisted of 13 people - ten from the Semi-Finals cut, two Golden Ticket holders from Friday and Saturday, and Billy Marks who got in from winning the Damn Am 2002 Finals.

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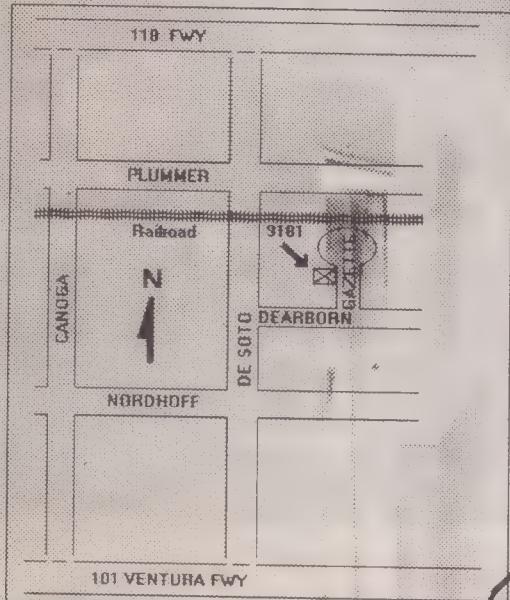
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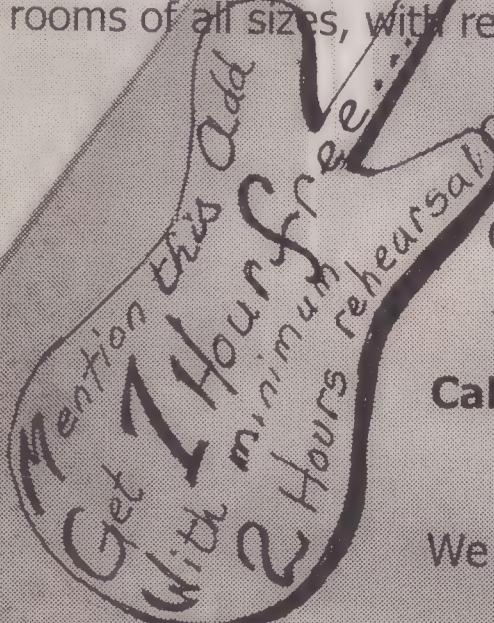
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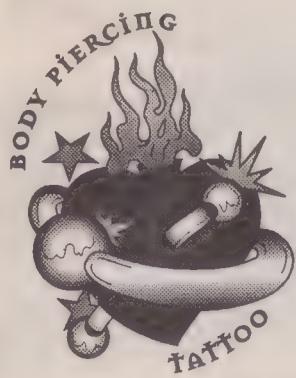
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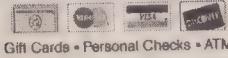
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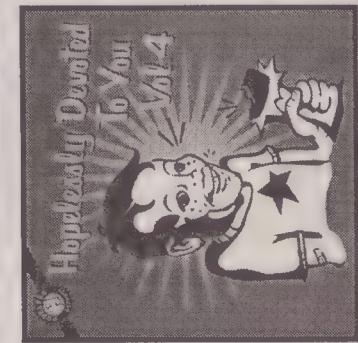
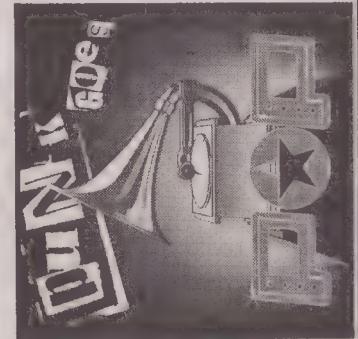
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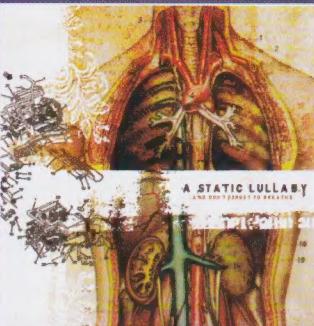
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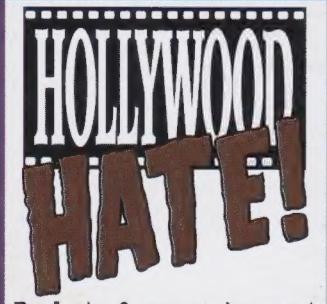
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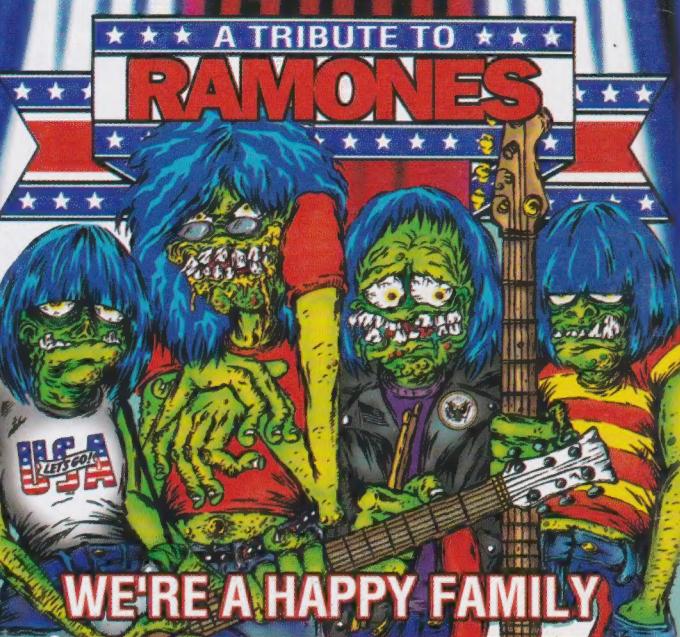
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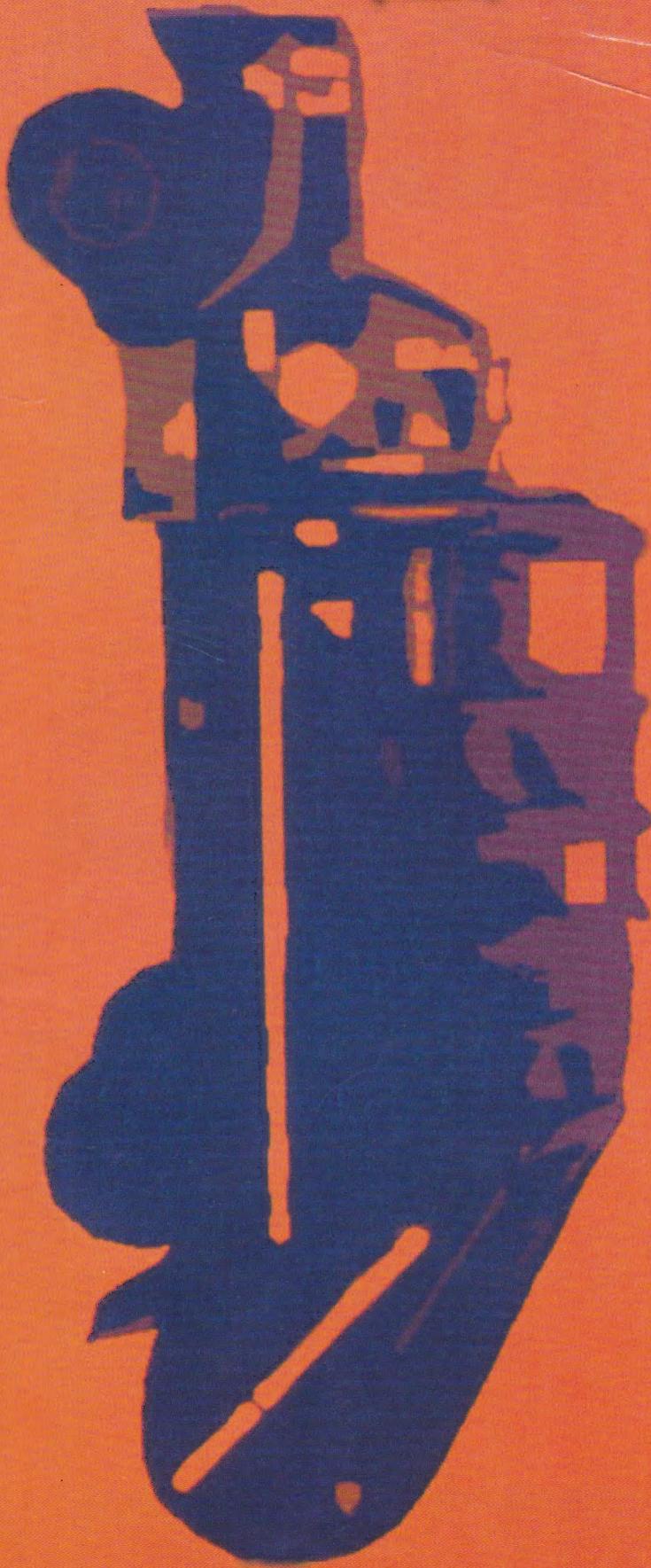


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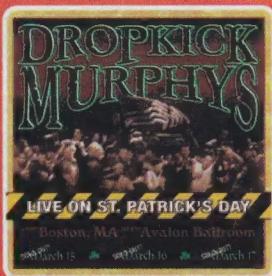
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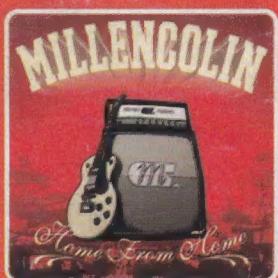
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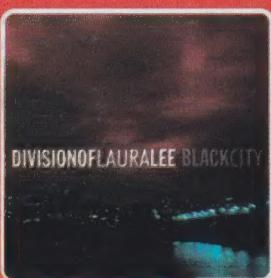
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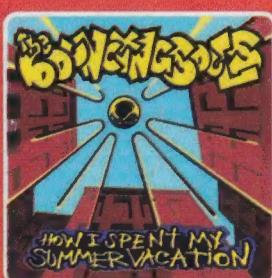
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